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AUTHOR:

HEUGH, HUGH

TITLE:

CONSIDERATIONS ON
CIVIL ESTABLISHMENTS...

PLACE:

GLASGOW

DATE:

1833

Master Negative #

93-81292-9

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Original Material as Filmed - Existing Bibliographic Record

937.42 Heugh, Rev. Hugh. 1782-1846.
Z2 Considerations on civil establish-
ments of religion... 3^d ed.
Glasgow 1833. Nar. D. in O.. 98 p.

No. 12 of a volume of pamphlets.

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TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35mm

REDUCTION RATIO: 11X

IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA IIA IB IIB

DATE FILMED: 4/15/93

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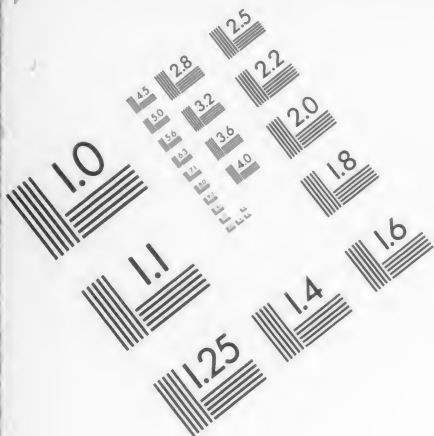


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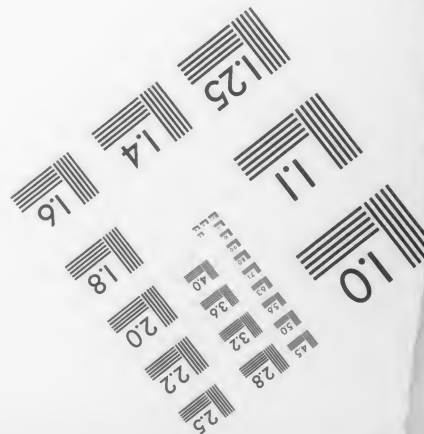
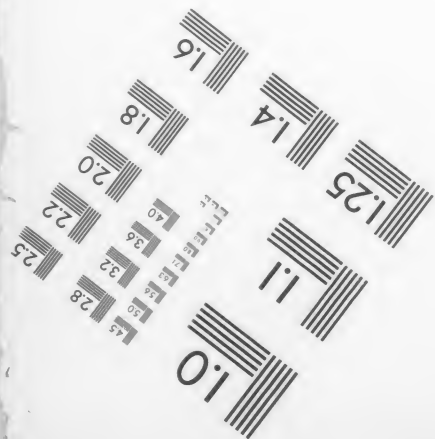
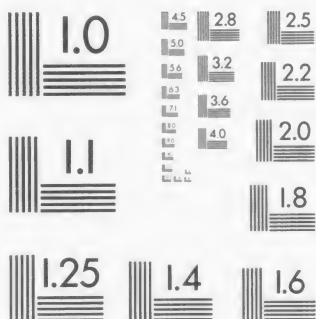
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CONSIDERATIONS
ON
CIVIL ESTABLISHMENTS
OF
RELIGION;
WITH AN APPENDIX,
CONTAINING REMARKS ON
DR. INGLIS'S "VINDICATION."

By H. HEUGH, D.D.

THIRD EDITION.

GLASGOW:
DAVID ROBERTSON, TRONGATE;
JOHN WARDLAW, EDINBURGH;
WESTLEY & DAVIS, LONDON.

MDCCCXXXIII.

CONSIDERATIONS,

§c.

IN addressing the public on Civil Establishments of religion, it is unnecessary, at the present crisis, to shew the importance belonging to the subject of inquiry. It is difficult, indeed, to arrest the attention of the community generally to any subject not very palpably connected with their individual interests, or not associated with incidents that stir the public mind; but by all who have seriously directed their minds to this subject—by the active friends of religious Establishments of the empire on the one side, and by the opponents of these Establishments on the other—there seems to be perfect harmony in this at least, that the question is one of the most important to which the attention of this excited country is at this moment turned. I do not speak of those abettors of our Establishments who cling to them for wealth, and distinction, and influence only, or whose attachments have no higher origin than educational influence, or common usage, and fashion; the former connecting with this question the interest with which cupidity and ambition invest their favourite objects, the latter that which powerful prejudice inspires; nor do I refer to those among the dissenting bodies whose hostility to Civil Establishments may originate in causes not less reprehensible. I know that there are excellent men in our endowed Churches, both Episcopalian and Presbyterian, who honestly believe that with these Establishments the cause of religion, of morality, of social order and happiness is inseparably linked; that the fall of these institutions, that is, the removal of their legal Establishment, would be the fall of this country; and who have enlisted in their defence, not only their earliest and

most pleasing recollections, but likewise their most ardent religious and patriotic feelings. On the other hand, there are many, whom I at least reckon equal (I lay no claims to superiority,) in whatever most adorns the character of the man and of the Christian, and who cordially coincide with the former in all their leading views of Christian doctrine and morals, who regard the establishment of Christianity by civil legislation as a great evil, which the genius of this religion, and the authority of Christ proscribe; the tendency and the effects of which they believe to be most injurious to the interests of that very religion which it ostensibly befriends; and the removal of which, they would gladly hail as the dawn of a brighter day than Christianity has ever seen, since she bent from her native dignity and independence, and crouched to the protection of imperial Rome.

But while the importance of the question is extensively conceded, and considerable attention has already been drawn to it, much still remains to be done to promote inquiry, and to help forward the public mind to an enlightened and satisfactory decision. Able and learned treatises have appeared on both sides of the question, and pamphlets, and articles in public journals have been very profuse, distinguished by various degrees of ability, in which the question has been considered in nearly all its aspects. Public meetings have been numerous, and much has been ably said and strongly felt, on these scenes of high and often useful excitement. It is undoubted, however, that the merits of the subject are still but very partially appreciated; that deliberate and dispassionate inquiry has not yet extended to the great mass of the reading part of the community, or to the larger proportion of any order of society; that misconceptions are very extensively abroad, and feelings are up, not the most creditable in themselves, nor the most favourable for candid examination; and, above all, that a *compendious view* of the question, within manageable limits, and unaccompanied with personal invective, or acrimonious feeling, is still, perhaps, a *desideratum*. How far the following pages are fitted to supply this latter deficiency must be left to others to decide. The author can sincerely affirm that they have been undertaken from a deep conviction of the solemn

importance of the subject in itself, and also from the present condition of our national affairs; and that, though reluctant to step into the arena of controversy, he should have been wanting to his sense of duty, had he hesitated to do the little he has it in his power to accomplish, to forward a cause in which he believes not only the civil rights of dissenters, now constituting a large majority of the church-going population of the British empire, and the peace and happiness of our common country, but also the interests of scriptural religion and holiness are essentially involved.

SECTION I.

COMMON FALLACIES.

BEFORE proceeding to the examination of the question itself, it will be of advantage to bring together the leading mistakes, by which, it appears to me, the minds of many are misled in this inquiry; mistakes which have been often presented, often exposed, but which, I apprehend, run through many defences of religious Establishments, and operate, perhaps insensibly, on the minds of many, as if they were satisfactory arguments in their favour.

I. Opposition to Civil Establishments of religion is confounded with opposition to the Church of Christ; and the purpose of attempting the removal of the former is represented as equally directed to the destruction of the latter.

If this has not been the *policy*, it has been the *practice* at least, of the defenders of these institutions, in former periods as well as at this day. To the candour of the friends of Establishments I may confidently appeal, whether this representation of the efforts and the designs of their opponents be not all but universal. In the common nomenclature of charges, sermons, tracts, and larger works, the friends and defenders of Establishments are the friends and defenders of *the Church*—their opponents

are enemies of *the Church*—if the number of the latter seems to multiply, and if their efforts are apparently taking effect, *the Church is in danger*—and to meet and repel the combinations of horrid conspirators against *the Church*, her defenders are summoned to rally, and are encouraged by the assurance that *the Church* is founded on a rock, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. I might fill full many a page with quotations to this effect from writers both old and recent; and I might easily portray the horror with which these statements tend to inspire the well-intentioned against these unholy men, and their sacrilegious efforts, who combine to destroy *the Church*.

But is not all this fallacious? Let us explain. The religious Establishments are not synonymous, are not co-extensive with the Church of Christ. The Church consists of the followers of Christ; his followers are found in those religious bodies which are without the pale of the Establishments, as truly as those who are within; the disunion, the dispersion, the annihilation as societies, of the dissenting bodies, would not be the destruction of the Church of Christ, neither would the occurrence of these calamities to the Established Churches be the destruction of Christ's Church. In the former case, the Church would subsist within the Establishment; in the latter, among the dissenters; in neither would it be destroyed.

But what tendency has the removal of the establishment of the endowed Churches to destroy those Churches, to destroy that portion of Christ's Church which the British laws establish? If opposition to the civil establishment of the Church meant, that the arm of the state should be employed to deprive the endowed Churches of their ministers, or their places of worship, to disperse their assemblies, and prohibit their worship, then it would merit the application of the terms which have been applied to it. Or, if it were essential to the existence of these Churches that they be upheld by the power, and nourished by the resources of the state; if the Church be considered as a legal corporation, to which certain secular privileges belong by law, and if the removal of these privileges would be the downfall of the Church, then the opponents of the Establishments do seek her downfall.

Suppose, however, that the establishment of the endowed Churches were withdrawn, what would follow? Would their functionaries quit their posts? Would their administrations cease? Would their flocks be dispersed? Would their creed or their usages be altered? The same persons would assemble in the same places; and the same religious services would be conducted. There would be the change of the name, the Established Church; but the body so denominated would not be changed. There would be a change of the source of pecuniary support, for every thing necessary for the temporal maintenance of the institution; now the state supplies it—then the members of the Church would perform this office; but the institution itself would remain what it now is. In a word, the Churches now subsisting by public endowments would be upheld as the Christian Church was for three hundred years; and as, in so many of her sections, she subsists at this day.

Let it be remembered then, that the whole question, practically considered, is not, whether the Church or any division of it shall be upheld or put down?—but whether it shall be provided for by the state, or by its own members?

II. The Established Churches, it is said, have done much good; they have numbered among their members, and their ministers, many excellent and illustrious men; they are as active at this day as in any former period for their own improvement, and for the benefit of the country, and it is therefore, unwise, and unkind, to do any thing hostile to their interests.

Laudatory statements to this effect meet us every where; nor must we think it strange that considerable exaggeration should result from the unwitting fondness of excuseable partiality—that the picture, executed by the hand of a friend, should present the more pleasing objects in a strong light, and with much prominence, and should throw the more unsightly into the shade.

But what dissenter ever insinuated a doubt, that incalculable good has been done, through the instrumentality of good men in the Established Churches? After as large deductions as truth will admit of evil resulting from

the corruptions in these Churches, and from the corrupting influence of their dependence on the state, no candid dissenter will experience any emotion but that of pleasure, in contemplating the advantages, certain or probable, to the souls of men, and to the best interests of the country, which have resulted, through the blessing of God, from the administration of Christian ordinances, and the influence of talent, and of Christian character, in the Establishments. In their calmer and better hours, all good men must rejoice in the successes of the gospel in any quarter; the churchman in its successes among dissenters—dissenters in its triumphs in the Established Churches. No party must envy another the venerated names of men distinguished by talent, by literature, by piety, or by all these qualities combined; the additions made by such men to the intellectual and moral treasury of the country; and the aids we receive from their labours in study, and in devotion. There is a larger communion than that of any particular Church, or party. There is an intellectual communion among all cultivated men. There is a holy fellowship of mind and heart among those who think and feel alike, on whatever is most ennobling to the spirit, and dear to the hopes of man; there is the communion of the family of the redeemed; nor can the artificial enclosures of sect or party, or the transient animosity and alienation of controversy, prevent us from sharing in the common sympathies of all who belong to this wide-spread community.

But after these allowances, let us look to the fallacy. It no more enters into the argument against Establishments, to assert that no spiritual advantage can be enjoyed under them, than a similar assertion respecting the ministrations of dissenters enters into the argument against dissent. What has accomplished, under God, the advantages to the souls of men which have been enjoyed within the Established Churches? Is it any thing else than revealed truth, and the ordinances of Christian worship, the administration of which they enjoy? Surely it is not the legal establishment of these Churches—it is not tithes, royal ordinances, and Acts of Parliament, that have instructed, reformed, and comforted the worshippers. The support of Christian teachers by the state, has no

more produced those results, than the presentation of these teachers by that *patronage*, which is now so generally condemned. Were the funds for the support of the teachers, and the erection of the edifices, derived not from the state, but from the worshippers, the same spiritual processes would be going forward under their ministry. I do not now inquire whether most good is done in dissenting, or in endowed Churches; but it will be conceded at once, that the same sort of results follows the same sort of instruction among dissenters as among churchmen. The good then, is not doing by virtue of the Establishment; but by the truth and ordinances of Christ Jesus, which can be administered without a legal Establishment, as well as under it.—And then, as to eminent men, would intellect lose its lustre, talent its power, goodness its worth, by passing the precincts of the Establishment? Were Bates, Howe, Baxter, Doddridge, less illustrious than Tillotson, Chillingworth, Barrow, or Scott? Or could Hall have been greater in Lambeth than in Bristol?

It is no reason why the dissenters should receive a legal Establishment, that so much good has been effected by their labours, that talent has been found among their pastors, and so much Christian worth among their people; neither is their any reason why the endowed Churches should continue on similar grounds to hold their exclusive endowments.

III. Dissenters wish to get hold of the revenues of the Established Churches for themselves.

In most of the discussions produced by this question on either side of the Tweed, this supposed design of the dissenters is dwelt upon at great length. It is asserted that, in the worst sense of the term, *spoliation* of the property of the Churches is meditated by their opponents; and that they intend either to attempt the entire dispossession of the existing holders—or to share the ecclesiastical revenues along with them—or, finally, to obtain government grants, small, perhaps, compared with the wealth of the Establishments, yet great for the dissenters, and sufficient to induce them to suppress their outcry against state endowments, after their own sordid

purposes have been accomplished. When such dishonest intentions are not directly charged, a *suspicion* is insinuated that these intentions may exist; that although it may not be convenient to avow them now, they are ripening in the breasts of their leaders; and that in due time all disguise will be thrown off, all decency laid aside, and these leaders and their followers will stand forth, the shameless devotees of ambition, lucre, and hypocrisy. Some writers, indeed, advance a step further, and declare their willingness, if not their wishes, that these secret designs and projects of the dissenters should be anticipated, and that some pecuniary grant from the public treasury should be made to them without delay, to bribe, if you cannot argue, them into silence;—a proposal not inconsistent with the spirit of an Establishment shamed into an alliance with the spirit of toleration, and possibly put forth *as a feeler* to ascertain whether some step may not be taken—a trial of the pulse of the dissenters, to determine under what treatment it may be expedient to place them. And, truly, could the state be induced to offer, and the British dissenters to accept, after all that has passed, this politico-ecclesiastical bribe, the triumph of the Church would be complete, as far as the humiliation, the entire conquest, the utter prostration of her opponents are concerned; and she might, at her option, either lament, for the sake of Christianity and of human nature, the combination of such high profession with such unprincipled baseness; or indignantly hold them up to the scorn and derision of the country.

In a good state of religious society, when that charity which thinketh no evil receives the homage she merits, it were enough for those whose reputation is yet unstained with dishonour to disavow such sordid, and, in them, guilty purposes. But in a season of alienation and discord the voice of charity is not heard. Without contenting themselves, therefore, with an indignant disavowal of these imputations, the dissenters may appeal to the British public, whether the measures they are adopting can be reconciled with the purposes imputed to them, on any calculations of self-interest, or even on the dictates of common sense? Were we admitting the principle that *some* one religious society might be taken under the

patronage of the state, it might be imagined that we should come to issue with the existing Churches on the comparative claims which they and we can prefer for state favour; and, at all events, might plead that after *they* have so long basked in the sunshine, it is *our* turn, in all fairness, to enjoy it for a season. Or did we merely complain that the favour of the state is too restricted, and that in this country, as in France, religious parties without distinction should enjoy a public endowment, it might then be alleged, and for aught I see, justly alleged, that we are dissatisfied with our condition, and wish that it should be improved by the legislature.

But what are the facts? Our pleading, whether just or unjust, is not against the establishment of one denomination of Christians, of one form of Christianity, but against the establishment of any denomination, of any form of religion. We not only plead that it is partial and unjust to endow Episcopacy and to neglect Independency—to take Presbytery into favour, and to pass by Methodism; or that the legislation is inconsistent with itself, and unworthy of the state, which endows Presbytery in Scotland, but disowns it in England; which emblazons with all splendour Episcopacy in the South, but leaves it in poverty and dishonour in the North; which establishes Popery in Canada, but excludes it in Ireland. But we declare it as our belief, we plead for it as the dictate of reason and the doctrine of revelation, we form our societies, and take our measures on the very principle, that Christians of every name and party should be left to their own resources unaided by the compulsory support of the state; and that no other favour should be shown to any Church, than that which should be shown to every Church, the protection of all its members in their equal rights and liberties, so long as they discharge the duties of loyal and obedient subjects. It is not, then, hypocrisy, or ambition, or avarice, that you would have to charge on dissenters, did they envy the wealth of the Church, or desire to share in her endowments; it is a folly of which no sane mind is capable; it is labouring, on principle, and with their eyes open, to secure the certain frustration of their own purposes.

IV. It is affirmed that opposition to the Established Churches is a personal injury to their ministers; that its design and tendency are to reduce them to poverty, by depriving them of their temporal support; and that an object so injurious must originate in the worst and most malignant feelings of the heart.

It is with deep concern that I have observed this fallacy operating to a great extent; to such an extent, indeed, as to produce an exasperation of feeling, and an intemperance of language, which only great personal wrong, endured or apprehended, and proceeding from the basest principles, could be supposed to call forth. On the grounds I have just alluded to, it were useless simply to disavow the existence of the alleged feelings, and yet I may be permitted to remark, that, higher considerations apart, it is possible, this exacerbation of feeling and language on the part of the friends of the existing Establishments may be carried too far, for their own sakes, and that sooner than they are aware: for if to attack—not the doctrine of the Church—not her worship—not any thing which originally belonged to the Church of the Redeemer—and nothing essential to her existence, and even her spiritual prosperity, but solely this *accident*, this *extrinsic circumstance* in her worldly relations, her *state alliance and endowment*, shall awaken clerical wrath beyond what even immorality or heresy has been generally known to produce, the British public may begin to theorize unfavourably on the causes which must account for this ecclesiastical phenomenon. These are not the times when it is prudent for old monopolists, whether in the colonies or the mother country, whether in commerce or in religion, to defend their tottering battlements, by throwing down on opponents, who seek only the abolition of their exclusive privileges, showers of abuse.

There was a period in the history of the three kingdoms, when the Roman Catholics held the revenues now in possession of the Established Churches. Would the Roman Catholics have been justified in regarding their dispossession as a measure of personal hostility on the part of the Protestants; even when the Protestants took possession of the revenues of which the Catholics were

deprived? Or would the Roman Catholics do well to consider the continued holding of these revenues by their Protestant rivals, as continued personal wrong to them, and to their clergy? Is it fit, then, that the call of the dissenters at this day—not for the transfer of the countenance and revenues of the state from the Episcopalian and Presbyterian Establishments to themselves—but solely for undoing all distinctions of party, and placing the long-favoured sects on the same level with the rest of the subjects, should be regarded as involving personal wrong to the office-bearers, or other members of these sects, or be traced to any malignant feelings against them? When the government of this country chooses to economize, and to reduce a number of unnecessary places, would the holders of these proscribed places judge correctly in ascribing the wholesome purpose, not to the just desire of the government of the country to save the money, or at least gratify the wishes of the nation, but to an intention of personal wrong to those reduced? But, after all, this is not our answer; for I do not know the individual who would argue for the reduction of the *existing holders* of ecclesiastical benefices, at least among the working clergy—who would plead for the immediate and entire withdrawal of the existing endowments—who would take one farthing from the present incumbents in the Scottish Establishment—or who, even in the wealthier Churches of England and Ireland, would propose to do more than reduce them within moderate limits, and, perhaps, equalize them more wisely and equitably among present labourers. Present holders must be provided for, and by the existing endowments; let new arrangements take effect on their successors. Let the English bench be kept up at its full amount, if the Church of England shall so desire it—let Ireland, if that be her mind, preserve all her bishops, and other clergy, and add to their number—and let Scottish Presbyterians multiply their churches and their ministers as they will; but let all be done, no longer by the compulsory exactions of a partial legislation, but by the free-will offerings of the faithful, as under the law, and under the gospel.

V. The opponents of Church Establishments are the

friends and allies of infidels and anarchists; their cause, therefore, must be bad; and it should be shunned and reprobated by all who wish well either to religion, or social order.

This fallacy is probably in more general circulation than any I have noticed. In the writing and speeches of the defenders of Establishments it seems a favourite topic of declamation. And it must be owned that it is specious. It is well fitted to affect the timid of both sexes, and to rouse the loyal, the polite, the pious. "What! associate yourselves with low radicals! Support a cause which finds favour with the very refuse of British society! Give the hand of fellowship to the blasphemer, the scorner, the infidel! This is the motley array with which you are now marshalled against the Church of Christ; and by which you threaten to profane our Zion, to raze the walls of our Jerusalem."

It is easy to conceive the horror which such representations are fitted to inspire. It is true there are counter statements, that set forth facts of rather a staggering description. It is not denied, that not only men of the first order of talent, but many of the holiest among us, patterns of every Christian grace, and living models of the religion of the Bible, after the fullest and most patient and dispassionate examination of the subject they have been enabled to conduct, have long come to the conclusion, that the establishment of Christianity by civil force is antichristian. It must appear somewhat startling, too, that Christian people, who are examples to the community in the industry and sobriety of their habits, and their practice of the domestic virtues—who seem to be devout worshippers every first day of the week—who were never suspected of a civil or political outrage in the course of their lives—who, in Christian sentiment, conduct, and hope, resemble the very *elite* of the members of the Established Churches—nay, that the pastors under whom these Christians have been reared, and whose ministry they prefer, should, in large masses, ally themselves, for the very worst purposes, with the enemies of revealed religion, of sound morals and of social order. Nor can I doubt that many who have allowed themselves to be carried away by the fallacious pleadings to which

I allude, will pause when they reflect that men as unprincipled in creed, and as licentious in conduct, are found in the ranks of the defenders of the Church, as can, even by possibility, be found in those of her opponents; and that if the juxta-position and co-operation of men so diverse in character prove nothing unfavourable to the one side, neither can they to the other.

But the whole pleading is erroneous in principle. For, in the first place, it confounds the quality of a system with the character of those who befriend or oppose it. Truth and error depend for their essential qualities on the character neither of their friends, nor of their opponents. A good cause does not become bad when the bad befriend it; nor will a bad cause have its quality improved by its unhappily securing the favour of some wise or good men. The English Reformation, as far as it went, was nothing the worse because it originated in the bad passions of a heartless tyrant. Shall we despise chemistry because so many French infidels led the way in the brilliant course of chemical discovery? Or were the principles of mathematics, or the laws of motion, damaged, because Sir John Leslie taught them in the Scottish metropolis?—It violates principle in another view. It confounds cooperation for common objects, with fellowship in the Christian Church; or with the selections of Christian friendship, in private intercourse, or domestic life. To admit into the communion of the Christian Church the immoral, or the profane, is indeed a grievous departure from Christian principle, and is hardly less injurious to the Church itself, than to the unhappy persons so sinfully received into her communion. It debases the former; it deceives the latter; it removes the line by which the one should be visibly separated from the other. I have often been struck with the inconsistency of the defenders of Established Churches in this particular. They declaim against association with persons of loose opinions in religion and politics, while these very persons are in religious fellowship, in *ecclesiastical communion*, with those from whom they call upon us to keep aloof.*

* I am not to be understood as granting that the charge of infidelity brought against certain public men who favour the views of dissenters

We do not select immoral men or infidels for the private intimacies of Christian friendship, we do not receive them into the communion of our churches; but they censure us because on certain common points the infidel and we agree, and co-operate. Would you refuse to employ an able surgeon, or lawyer, because he differed from you in his religious opinions? Would you refuse to fight in the same ranks with the infidel soldier, for the liberties of your country, menaced by foreign oppression, or domestic tyranny? Would you decline to co-operate with an infidel, for your common protection from plunder, or for extending the blessings of liberty to the enslaved, or scattering the necessities of life among the starving? Would you desert the senate, because the infidel or the profligate may be there? Above all, would you shun him in these common duties, and unite with him in sacred services? Would you refuse him what truth dictates, that you agree with him as far as you do agree; and concede to him what truth forbids, by seeming to agree with him in those things, those sacred and all-important matters, in which you really differ.

No. We must not be frightened from our propriety by bugbears. We are bound to do whatever wise benevolence may dictate, and humility will allow, for the conversion of the unbelieving and the immoral; but we must desert no good cause for the erroneous belief, or the irregular life, of some who may defend it. The infidel may love liberty; and we shall not on that account love it less. And should all the infidels in the country lift their voices against the compulsory support of a religious sect, we shall not be silent because they speak out. Nothing is more deplorable, than to observe men with high religious profession shutting their eyes to evils which those whom they brand as infidels easily detect; defending by alleged religious sanction the most gross and immoral abuses, political or ecclesiastical, against which men of all parties raise their indignant voice; and labouring to stigmatize, as enemies of religion and of civil or-

is well-founded. On the contrary, I am persuaded that there are cases in which it has been wantonly and unjustly brought forward.

der, those who exert themselves to have those abuses removed.

VI. The present movements against the Established Churches are described as causeless and wanton acts of aggression; they are even represented as deeply ungrateful on the part of those by whom they are made; and as indicating a restless dissatisfaction with the constitution of the country, which ought to be repressed.

Who was interfering with the dissenters, it has been asked, that they have all at once turned their forces against the Churches? Were they subjected to persecution, as their forefathers were—were any new measures, unfriendly to their religious interests adopted, or even meditated, by the legislature—were the slightest obstruction presented to the freedom of their religious worship, to the circulation of their writings, or even to the extension of their churches, they might have cause for complaint, or some excuse for their present excitement. But when the reverse of all this is the case—when they enjoy all the liberty that reasonable beings can desire—when so very lately, the disabilities under which they laboured, and which the legislation of our ancestors had handed down, have been generously revoked by the mildness and liberality of modern times, ingratitude stamps their present hostility; and there must be in those men a restless dissatisfaction with the usages of their country which it would be dangerous to favour, and which it is the duty of the legislature, and of all good men, to discountenance and put down. In short, modern dissenters are the fabled serpent, that stung the kind breast in which it was warmed to new life.

Now, if the following reasoning be correct, I think it will appear that the aggression is entirely on the other side, that is, on the side of the Established Churches, and of that unjust legislation, as I shall endeavour to show it is, by which those Establishments have been so long supported. They, we hold, have been aggressors of long standing, and they complain of us, because they think we endanger their power to make their aggression permanent. Assuming in this stage of our observations, what I shall presently attempt to prove, that the Estab-

lishments are unjust, and that they press injuriously on that large class of the community who cannot conscientiously join them, then which party is the aggressor? Is it that party that seeks, by fair and constitutional means, relief from a grievance; or is it the party, by whom, or for whom, the grievance was made, and by whom it is sought to be perpetuated? Is the oppressor, who seeks to continue his oppression, or is the oppressed, who seeks only immunity, the first assailant in the contest by which the question at issue between them is to be decided? Or if oppression be considered a strong and offensive similitude, is the monopolist, who strives to maintain his unjust advantages to the exclusion of his neighbour, and scolds and threatens when his supposed rights are called in question, is he not the aggressor on the rights of those around him, rather than those who suffer by the unjust partiality which he enjoys, and who seek, not the possession of his advantages, but simply, the abolition of his monopoly, unaccompanied with any claim for damages or compensation for the injuries they have long sustained? For the rest—dissenters ought to be grateful to the Father of mercies for the great advantages they enjoy, and grateful to those legislators, (Churchmen, I suspect, can claim but a small share of this homage,) by whose exertions these advantages have been secured to them; but it is not inconsistent with gratitude for the advantages we enjoy, to seek exemptions from evils we still suffer. And, as for disaffection to the state, it will probably be found, that these are the best friends of the peace of their country, and the stability of its laws and its government, not who defend abuses which existing law may unhappily sanction, and which spread through the state disease and weakness, but who, with cautious yet firm decision, would apply the knife to the gangrene, that the health and vigour of the body may be increased and prolonged.

On these mistakes I have probably dwelt too long in the apprehension of some of my readers; but every one who has watched the discussion of great public questions must have remarked, how greatly and how long, the chief subjects in debate have been concealed, or obscured, by the mists which error, and prejudice, and

excited feeling have succeeded in throwing around them. And I am persuaded that whoever is acquainted with the history of this controversy, and with its present state, must in candour admit, that had every thing been spared which is fairly referable to the various fallacies which I have noticed, a very large deduction would have been made from the speeches and the writings to which it has already given rise.

SECTION II.

INQUIRY INTO THE LAWFULNESS OF CIVIL ESTABLISHMENTS OF RELIGION.

THE manner in which the Church has enjoyed the support of the state has not been uniform. It appears in several and important varieties at the present day, and it has done so in former ages. Nor has less diversity appeared in the pleadings which the advocates of ecclesiastical Establishments have advanced in their favour. A faithful and minute history of these varieties, both in the institutions themselves, and in the principles on which they have been professedly formed and defended, would be very instructive, and not a little curious. It will suffice for my purpose to indicate some of these, in the shortest manner.

The absolute and despotic form demands notice first, as having been the most ancient probably, and certainly the most general. Under this form, the state allying itself with some one class of professed Christians exclusively of all others, not only throws around it the protection of law, and supports it by compulsory exactions, but interdicts the creed and worship of all other denominations; and regarding the toleration of these sects as a criminal connivance with their errors and false worship, employs all its power and terrors, to compel universal obedience to one spiritual, as to one civil code of law. This is religious intolerance and despotism in the very zenith of their glory. It must not, however, be thought that religion and religious uniformity, the plausible objects for

which such expedients are ostensibly employed, have been gained by them, any farther at least, than profession is concerned. The Church has either been the tool of the state, or the state has been the vassal of the Church; and the one has employed the other, for religion professedly, but really for its own purposes of ambition, or lucre. From these unhappy countries in which such systems of civil and religious tyranny prevail, true religion flies; and her place is usurped, though under the veil of hypocrisy, by superstition, error, infidelity, and crime. In this form Civil Establishments appeared in Christendom prior to the Reformation, and continue in some Catholic states to this day; but I am not aware that in any country where the light of the Reformation penetrated, and still shines, however faintly, there is any extensive desire to recur to it.

In the countries which acknowledged the Reformation, establishments of Christianity assumed a *milder form*, for the most part. When the Popish church was repudiated, and a purer faith owned, the Reformed Churches obtained that favour with the state, from which their predecessor had been ejected. The laws which formerly established Popery now sanctioned the creed of Calvin or Luther; the revenues which the Popish church enjoyed were now transferred to the Reformed, as far as they escaped the rapacious hands of the monarch, or his nobles; and in most cases, the fallen party was subjected to discountenance and disabilities, the same in kind, though modified in the degree of their severity, which itself had been accustomed to inflict. In those days of dim vision—very dim in as far as the perception of the common rights and liberties of mankind was concerned—before the advancing light had shown to Protestants the unrighteousness of all civil inflictions for conscience' sake, the presumption of man's usurping the throne of the Almighty, and judging for his fellow-man respecting his duty to God and his eternal salvation, even Protestants were doing in one country toward Roman Catholics the same things in substance which, in another, Roman Catholics were doing toward Protestants; and, (which was not unnatural, after the principle was adopted and acted on,) inflicting on their fellow-Protestants a discipline not dissimilar to that

which they had themselves experienced from the hands of Rome. Our own illustrious Knox, and his reforming compeers were passing through the medium of a Scottish Parliament bloody laws against Papists, ordaining that the idolater must die the death, (laws, I believe, which, independently of other circumstances, their own better nature would have restrained them from executing) while the flames of the Inquisition were consuming Protestant martyrs in Spain and Italy. The "bright occidental star" of England, proud Elizabeth, shed no very benign influences on her puritanical subjects; and our Jameses and Charleses employed their High Commissions, their Star Chambers, the bayonets of their soldiers, and the decisions of their Lauds and their Lauderdale, to force Episcopacy on Presbyterians, while the blood of the Huguenots flowed in profusion, under the counsels of the Guises, and the bloody despotism of the Charleses, and Henrys, and Louises of France. There is no doubt that the Reformed Churches were hostile to the doctrine of toleration; wished to monopolize religious liberty; and were restrained, as far as they were restrained, from intolerance in practice, not by their own principles, but by the mild influence of the gospel of peace, and the advancing spirit of the age in which they lived. Few modern friends of Establishments would plead for reducing to practice the laws of those days; and are not over fond of having them drawn forth to public view from the statute-books, or religious formularies, in which they are recorded. In this *second form* of Establishments, then, the separatists exist rather by connivance, and practical sufferance, and with great consequent annoyances, than by formal toleration and acknowledgment.

But the most plausible form in which Establishments have appeared is in *alliance with toleration*. "Toleration is of two kinds—the allowing to dissenters the unmolested profession and exercise of their religion, but with an exclusion from offices of trust and emolument in the state; which is *partial* toleration; and the admitting them, without distinction, to all the civil privileges and capacities of other citizens; which is a *complete* toleration."^{*}

* Paley's Moral Philosophy.

The *approach* which has been happily made in Great Britain to the *complete* toleration which Dr. Paley describes, is comparatively recent; and like every great improvement in the practice of legislation, has resulted remotely from free discussion, but more immediately from a succession of wrongs and struggles; of wrongs rousing the injured, and through them forcing onward the tide of sentiment; and of struggles, the object of which has been to compel institutions to adjust themselves to opinions. This state of extensive and advancing toleration in the British empire, from the period of the Revolution till lately, is well known. Its recent progress by the emancipation of our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects, and by the abolition of the truly infamous Test and Corporation Acts, is very auspicious to the hopes of the friends of religious liberty. And here we now are with religious Establishments, in the least offensive form in which they have ever appeared in this country; connected with a toleration nearly *complete* in Dr. Paley's sense of the term; with some of their most oppressive accompaniments, in the judgment of their opponents, confessedly abolished; with not a few of their most necessary supports, in the estimation of their friends, withdrawn. Here we are, with an Episcopalian Establishment in England and Ireland, a Presbyterian Establishment in Scotland, and a Roman Catholic Establishment in Lower Canada, all other denominations being allowed to profess and worship as they choose; only the whole ecclesiastical revenues being, by the compulsion of law, appropriated exclusively to these Establishments, with two very trifling exceptions—the grant of a small sum to Ireland annually from the public treasury—and the exemption of Episcopalian and other dissenters in Canada from paying their proportion to the local Establishment. In the following argument, I shall give the friends of Establishments the full benefit of this mild and plausible form in which they now exist; although, with all fairness, in trying the principle, I shall pursue it to its just consequences.

I am quite aware that there is a *fourth form* to which I ought to allude, in which all sects enjoy a legislative provision. France cares for no religion, and she equally endows all. In some of the States of America, contribu-

tion for the support of religion was compulsory, while its appropriation was left to the option of every individual. This usage is now, I believe, extinct. It seems to be the last piece of the old leaven which the young state had brought over from the old. It is purged out, and the whole has indeed become "a new lump." In the following argument, I do not need to advert very particularly to this form of Establishments. The compulsory principle being recognised, I oppose it on this ground. And the more reflecting among the friends and opponents of Establishments will agree in condemning it, as involving on the part of the community the sinful inconsistency of giving public countenance and support to all forms of belief and worship, and thereby tending to destroy practically religious and moral distinctions.

I. I argue against Civil Establishments of religion, first of all, because they imply on the part of the civil powers, a legislative judgment in religious matters, which, I hold, is not competent to them.

That a judgment in religious matters is implied in the very idea of a Civil Establishment of religion, is nearly self-evident; and will be obvious, whether we attempt to form the theory of Establishments abstractly, or advert to the history of their formation.

Suppose the chief magistrate, or the legislature of any country, about to establish some form of religion for the nation, the magistrate, or the legislature would sit in judgment on the question, What form of religion is it right to establish?—and the public deed legalizing the form of belief and worship which had been determined on, would proceed on that judgment, and would be an authoritative declaration of it. The theory of an Establishment, then, is an overt declaration, on the part of the magistrate, or legislature, to this effect; To us it belongs to judge what form of belief and worship the nation over which we preside should receive and support; and we have judged and enacted accordingly.

History, in this instance, confirms theory. To go no farther than our own country, look at the origin of our religious Establishments, and it will appear that this right of judging in religious matters was assumed and exercis-

ed by the Scottish and English monarchs, or legislature. At the Scottish Reformation, the parliament examined the question, whether the ancient or the new opinions should henceforth be the religion of the land; and by acts passed in the exercise of this unchallenged right, the parliament judged that the Popish faith should be abrogated, and the Reformed substituted in its place. Henry in England broke the fetters of Rome with his own despotic hand; proclaimed away the old religion; and authoritatively introduced the new. The struggles in Scotland, when Episcopacy and Presbytery contended for the mastery, were not merely a war of words, or books, or Churches—proselyting or counter-proselyting on the part of the rival sects; the court was the head-quarters of the strife—the Presbyterians, eager to obtain its judgment and sanction for Presbytery—and the Episcopalians as eager for the idolized authority on behalf of their loved Episcopacy. Even the Westminster standard-books were of civil as well as ecclesiastical authority; the parliament summoning the Assembly—ordering the books to be prepared—judging of their merits after they were finished—and enacting them by the sanction of their authority as the national creed. When Charles came back, he judged them unsuitable for England, and by his royal authority restored Episcopacy. And William, and his parliament, at the revolution, judged every thing over again; and fixed Presbytery for Scotland, and Episcopacy for the other two kingdoms.

Now, is this right competent to a human legislature? May a monarch, may a parliament, assume and exercise it, without delegation from those for whom they legislate? Should it be delegated to the ruler, or legislature of any country? Or is its assumption, when it is assumed, or its delegation, should it ever be delegated, the assumption or delegation of a supposed right, with which the civil powers should never be invested? I shall attempt to answer these questions.

That rulers have the right, and are under obligation, to judge for themselves in religion, is, of course, universally conceded. The highest public functions do not absorb this private right, do not exalt them above this personal

obligation. It were well for their own sakes, and for the interests of religion, if this right were acted on, if this obligation were fulfilled, by those high in place, with more independence of the prejudices of birth, station, or fashion, with deeper seriousness of feeling, and a greater honesty of purpose, to avow and follow out their convictions, at whatever cost, than, it is to be feared, is generally done. Nor is it easy to conceive stronger temptations to denude themselves practically of this right, which the meanest of the subjects enjoys, to neglect this obligation which lies on high and low alike, than the circumstances of monarchs, and other high functionaries afford; who must either profess and officially defend a creed, which, in many instances, they neither believe, nor understand, nor regard; or forego their interests, their power, and their splendour.

The first insurmountable objection to this alleged right of a legislature to judge respecting a national religion, is, that *it implies a judgment for others in that of which every man must judge for himself only*. God has given us a revelation of his will, which he has commanded us to examine, to believe, and to obey. Every man must give account to God for complying with this heavenly mandate, or neglecting it. Where is the third party, who, without an express divine appointment dares to interpose, and authoritatively to decide, what interpretation it becomes the individuals composing a nation to put upon this record of God, and by what forms they ought to worship him? The assumption is impiously arrogant. Dr. Paley evidently felt the "serious inconvenience," as he calls it, of a national creed, enforced by human authority; and pleads for the indispensable necessity of abating the evil to the utmost, of making it "as simple and easy as possible"—and "adapting it, from time to time, to the varying circumstances of the Church"—and, after all, making its statements rather "articles of peace," than "confessions of faith,"*—that is confessions of the subscriber's unbelief, doubt, or hypocrisy.

This objection becomes more forcible when it is considered *that the sanction of civil law implies not only*

* Mor. Phil.

authority, but force. Let there be no authority, and there is no law. And if the law does not secure obedience to itself—if it has no penal enforcement connected with it—if it is left to the subjects to obey or disobey it at their option, then it is virtually no law; it is a mere mockery of legislation; the legislature, and the thing legislated for are brought equally into contempt; and the sooner this shadow of a law vanishes the better. All, accordingly, who have pleaded for Civil Establishments of religion, have invariably held that the coercive power of the law must be employed to enforce them; although they differ as to the extent to which this power must be carried—some holding that it should repress religious errors opposed to the public creed—but all agreeing that it should sanction that creed by its authority, and enforce the pecuniary support of the Church. Dr. Ranken says, “The mere spiritual discipline of the Church may be slighted by light and ungodly minds, even among the clergy; the power of following it up with civil penalties, in their case, seems necessary to the general welfare.”* Warburton, in his ingenious but most sophistical defence of the Church of England, on principles, and for objects, which even Dr. Paley reprobates, as serving only to “debase the institution,” after demonstrating the natural independence of the Church on the state, proceeds to argue for his favourite *alliance*, for this, among other reasons, that the state may support the Church “by lending to it a coercive power.”† Dr. Paley’s definition of a “religious Establishment,” comprehends, as its second term, “a legal provision for the maintenance of the clergy,”‡ enforced, as a matter of course, by law, like any other tax. Besides the legal sanction to ecclesiastical formularies, Dr. McCrie expressly asserts, that it is the duty of the magistrate to “suppress *irreligion*, impiety, profanity, and blasphemy.”§ The Westminster Confession teaches, that the magistrate “hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed,

* Essay on the importance of Religious Establishments, page 114.

† Warburton’s Alliance, page 99.

‡ Mor. Phil.

§ Statements, &c. page 80.

all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented, or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.”*

Let us suppose, then, that the magistrate laden with obligations so onerous and so awful, addresses himself to the dread work of reducing these obligations to practice, the great question to be considered is, What form of religion shall he receive into the national code, and enforce by the national sanction? Shall we answer with some, “*the true religion?*” Were all minds in harmony on this most momentous subject, such a general expression might suffice, both for the conscience of the magistrate, and for the letter of the law. But as the law must be definite, and as the phrase, “the true religion,” is indefinite, the magistrate must proceed to define; and what then must he do? I shall not take the example of a Mahomedan, or a heathen magistrate; but of one existing amidst all the advantages of our own country. What shall he do? We know how magistrates have acted in establishing religion; the question before us is, How should they act? I do not wish to represent the divisions among Christians as more numerous or important than they are. I rejoice that in the leading points of truth and morals, Christians of many denominations so nearly harmonize. But the fact cannot be disguised that Christian denominations are many; and the question is not one of abstraction, but of practice, and must be grappled with, if the magistrate must legislate in religion—What creed, what class, shall he legalize?

As far as diversities of church order are concerned, Dr. Ranken is abundantly facile: He says, “There is no form of church government prescribed in the New Testament . . . Jesus Christ hath left the appointment of

* Confession, chap. 23. In the church with which the Author is connected, the approbation given to the Westminster Formularies is qualified with the exception of *whatever in these books teaches, or is supposed to teach, compulsory, persecuting, or intolerant principles in religion.*

subordinate constitutions and laws, to the ordinary exercise of human wisdom . . . Judging from facts, no one government will suit all times, all situations, all national tempers and characters. But whether the civil constitution hath derived its peculiar form from accident, or from expediency, or from necessity, it is certain there will and ought to be a general resemblance to it in the ecclesiastical constitution."* This is accommodating enough. Dr. Paley looks the difficulty more fully in the face, and with his wonted luminous simplicity gives us the following remarkable paragraph. "But after the right of the magistrate to establish a particular religion has been, upon this principle," (mentioned before) "admitted, a doubt sometimes presents itself, whether the religion which he ought to establish, be that which he himself professes, or that which he observes to prevail amongst the majority of his people. Now, when we consider this question with a view to the formation of a general rule upon the subject, (which view alone can furnish a just solution of the doubt) it must be assumed to be an equal chance whether of the two religions contain more of truth,—that of the magistrate, or that of the people? The chance then that is left to truth being equal upon both suppositions, the remaining consideration will be, from which arrangement more efficacy can be expected; from an order of men appointed to teach the people their own religion, or to convert them to another? In my opinion, the advantage lies on the side of the former scheme; and this opinion, if it be assented to, makes it the duty of the magistrate, in the choice of the religion which he establishes, to consult the faith of the nation rather than his own."†

There are only three ways of it. 1.—The magistrate must either establish every variety of religion which is professed in the nation, and thus, to use Dr. Paley's phrase; there will be "a chance" of his establishing "the true religion;"—a plan which would relieve the magistrate from a burden of anxiety, but which no enlightened friend of Establishments will defend. 2.—Or he must take the first part of Dr. Paley's alternative,

* Essay, pp. 17 and 19, 20.

† Mor. Phil.

and establish his own religion. 3.—Or he must take the second part of it, and establish that of the people, that is, of the majority of the people. Now if of the two latter he must adopt the former, and make his own conscience law for the nation, where is the human being to be found, uninspired, fallible, compassed with infirmities, who should dare to take upon him to legislate for the religion of a kingdom? Besides, if the conscience of the magistrate must govern the law, the law must change with the changing convictions of the magistrate. How many Establishments would this give us in the course of a generation? Or if he take the second part of the alternative, and establish the religion of the majority of the people, then he is met with the following difficulties: May not the majority be on the side of error, as, for example, every Protestant believes Ireland to be? Is the majority to dictate, through the medium of the magistrate, to the minority, in matters of divine revelation? Is the magistrate to be the conscious instrument of this presumptuous dictation, of this legislative enforcement of an erroneous belief? Is the magistrate to legislate in opposition to his conscience? Or is he to keep two consciences—a public and a private one; by the former of which he is to be governed as a magistrate, by the latter as a man? These difficulties appear to me insurmountable; and I may be permitted to ask, can a principle be other than false, and immoral, which, try it as you will, forces such results?

The subject may also be viewed in its relation to various forms of civil government, and we shall again be brought to the same conclusion.

It is hardly necessary in our circumstances to remark, that the power of legislating respecting religion should not be lodged with one, or with a few; with one despot, or with a despotic oligarchy. British freedom spurns despotic legislation on any subject, and therefore on the subject of religion. The friends and opponents of religious establishments who love liberty, (and who hates liberty?) will concur in the sentiment, that a despotic legislation in religion is inadmissible; although I must add, that if it is incumbent on the magistrate, *de facto*, to

legislate for the religion of the country, the despot, *de facto*, must judge and legislate in religion.

But let us select a more favourable case, let us take our own, and suppose such a legislature as freemen acknowledge proceeding to form a religious establishment for their country. Then, unless the country were unanimous on the subject of their intended procedure, (a case which we are not at liberty to assume) the same insurmountable difficulties which, we have seen, apply to the individual magistrate, are applicable to the collective representatives of a free people, compelled as they must be, in the same manner as the individual, either to adopt the religion of the majority of the nation, or that of the majority of their own body. But were these difficulties not supposed, let us consider how their legislation would proceed. 1.—The system on which they legislate must undergo that ample examination and discussion which its unequalled importance merits, and without which, although a decision might be given, it could not be regarded as conscientious and enlightened. 2.—And, secondly, the legislature must not only examine the system of religion to which they affix the high sanction of the nation, but they must follow out their own acts by watching over the working of the system after it has been established. The Westminster divines tell us, that the magistrate “hath authority, and it is *his duty*, to take order that unity and peace *be preserved* in the Church, that the truth of God *be kept pure and entire*, that all blasphemies and heresies *be suppressed*,” &c. and that he must “provide that *whatsoever is transacted* in synods *be according to the mind of God*.” And bishop Warburton holds that after an alliance of the Church with the state, the “civil magistrate being become protector of the Church, and consequently supreme head and director of it, the ministry is mostly in his power; that mutual dependency between the clergy and people, so pernicious to the state, being, by means of a settled revenue, quite broken and destroyed. He admits and excludes to the exercise of their function whom he sees fit, and grants it to none but such as give a previous security for their allegiance to him. By which means all that power and influence which the ministers and

leaders in a Church had over it before the alliance, as the protectors of religion, is now drawn off from them, and placed solely in the civil magistrate.”* Now whether we take the high views of Warburton, which the Church of Scotland rejects; or the doctrine of the Westminster divines, which is that of the Church of Scotland; or the obligation itself which the right to legislate respecting the Church supposes, we come equally to the conclusion—that the body which legislates for a religious Establishment must legislatively watch over the Establishment which its power has created. It dare not abandon the work of its own hands. Shall the legislature watch over its civil enactments, laws respecting taxes, turnpikes, war, or crime, and is it at liberty to neglect for one year the religious administration of its own Establishment, and the religious interests of the nation, which, it seems, are committed to its care? No—obvious analogy, common consistency, common sense demand, that if the state construct the machine, it must look after its working—that if it rear the national edifice, it must not only keep it in repair, but see how it continues to answer the declared purposes of its erection.

But what would all this amount to? Would it not convert the legislature into a theological arena? Would it not devolve on Peers and Commoners many of the most important and peculiar duties of bishops and presbyters, of pastors and deacons? Would it not transform the Parliament into the Convocation, the Assembly, the Synod, the Church-meeting; and confounding one of the most important of all distinctions, the distinction betwixt the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world? would it not transfer the functions and occupations of the former to the latter? But if you will not follow out your work, why do you commence it? If your premises conduct you to a false conclusion, why do you adopt them? I have no doubt that the Church would not more certainly go beyond her province were she to pass laws for the government of the state, than the state is transgressing the limits of its province when it legislates respecting the Church—that the one has no right to in-

* Alliance, pages 104, 105.

vade the territories of the other—and that the interests of both can only be secured by each contenting itself with the management of its own essentially distinct and independent domain.

Were we to quit the region of abstraction, and survey the field to which history points us, we might ask indignantly, Who have been the men, and what their qualifications, who have taken upon them to legislate for the Christian Church, from the days of Constantine, to this very hour? What is the voice of history, as to the known principles of their legislation? Has it been to distinguish divine truth from human error, purity in God's worship from human corruptions of it, holiness from sin? Have they been such men as were qualified for legislation of this description? Or have they consulted how they might most effectually render the Church the tool of their own ambition—the channel of their own influence—the means of gratifying their own private antipathies or attachments—the convenient instrument for securing their own emolument, or that of their families? Perhaps the men most competent for the object, who ever assembled to legislate for the Church, were the members of the Long Parliament, and after all, what was the verdict of those who mingled with them, and knew them best? Honest Mr. Rutherford, one of the Scottish members of the Westminster Assembly, says, “the House of Peers are rotten men; the life that is, is in the House of Commons, and many of them also have their religion to choose.”* With all possible respect for existing authorities, and their perfect competence for their proper official duties, who would willingly commit ecclesiastical questions to good king William, his right honourable Peers, and his honourable Gentlemen of the House of Commons? However grave they might look in the deeds themselves which they might pass on such subjects, must they not themselves laugh right heartily, in their *tete-a-tete* parties, at the very idea of their judging in such matters, and at the simplicity of those who would commit them to their judgment?

The conclusion is—the legislation of the state in the

* Letters, Part iii. Ep. 53.

Establishment of the Church is usurpation—the state thus legislating assumes a power which no state rightfully possesses—and the Church that consents to receive this Establishment is implicated in the guilt of this unholy usurpation—“Then both commonwealth and religion will at length, if ever, flourish in Christendom, when either they who govern discern between civil and religious, or they only who so discern shall be admitted to govern.”*

II. The Legislative Establishment of the Church implies injustice.

Justice requires that the state should extend equal favour to all, on whom it imposes equal burdens, and from whom it exacts equal allegiance. A departure from this principle, by demanding the same allegiance from all classes of the community, and imposing the same burdens on them, while injury is inflicted on any one class, or favour denied to it, is injustice.

Civil Establishments of religion are chargeable with this injustice. They consist in selecting one class of the community as the objects of the favour of the state—in distinguishing that class, not by its services to the state, not by the measure of its allegiance, not by the amount of its burdens, but solely by its opinions—and in extending, in a particular form, the patronage of the state to this class exclusively. To it the state grants a standing in law, as a recognised body, or corporation, which it denies to others—it forms a connexion with it, from which it excludes others—it secures to it emoluments, which it does not secure to others—it compels by the force of law, all other classes to contribute their proportion of money or other property to the support of this one, which, on its part, is required to contribute nothing to the support of others. All this is extending a species of favour and support to one class, which is denied to others, equally faithful, equally submissive to the state. Is not this essential, unqualified, injustice?

The duties of the governing and the governed are reciprocal. If the governing extended to every class of

* Milton's Prose Works, vol. 3, p. 318.

the governed equal favour, and if one class should refuse that full allegiance and obedience which the others render, would not the recusants be unjust to the government, and would not the government act justly in enforcing the same submission from them, which it demands and receives from their fellow-subjects? But is not injustice the same in its nature, when practised by the governing, as when it is practised by the governed?

The nature of the wrong may be illustrated otherwise. The individuals included in the favoured class, may have no superior personal claims to these excluded—they may have no superiority of talent, or learning, or religious or moral worth—they may not do more, nor be qualified for doing more, for promoting the best interests of the community; in all which the excluded classes may equal, or excel them. The class thus favoured may not stand in need of the pecuniary support which it enjoys; it may have the larger share of wealth; and the arrangement of the state may exhibit this form of injustice, that the poorer are compelled to contribute for the richer. And there may be no means of passing from the excluded to the favoured class, except at the expense of such sacrifices, as religious principle, and a good conscience forbid. This is the aspect of the injustice which the civil Establishments of religion in this empire present.

The injustice may be exemplified by an analogous case. Suppose a body of men who supply the necessities of life taken into the favour of the state—suppose that a certain proportion of the manufacturers of bread receive the exclusive recognition and alliance of the government, not because they are poor and need it, not because they produce an article of superior value, not for any personal services or merit—and suppose the community, the poorest in the community, whether they use the article or not, those who dislike and refuse equally with those who use it, compelled by the force of law, to support those established manufacturers of the staff of life, would not the injustice of such an arrangement be as obvious as its absurdity? The injustice is the same when it is applied to religion.

This injustice implied in Civil Establishments of religion is of the nature of religious persecution towards the

other classes of the community. What is religious persecution? Is it not subjecting an innocent person to injury for conscience' sake? Is it not the infliction of evil for his religious opinions or usages? The evil thus inflicted may vary indefinitely in its amount. To persecute, it is not necessary to hang or burn the victim. It is not even necessary to immure him in a dungeon, or to banish him from his country. The infliction may be indefinitely lessened; but if you inflict at all, you persecute. One stripe is as really penal as thirty-nine. A legal indignity for the sake of religion is persecution, as really as a fine or stripes. The infliction on character, name, *status* in society, is as bad as blows, is so felt by those who bear it, and would be so felt by the favoured class were they subjected to it. Nay, you may persecute by mere negation. If you keep money from entering the pocket, the injury is nearly the same as if you took it out after it had been put in. The recent disqualification of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, and of the English dissenters, were in their nature penal, as really as positive inflictions; were felt to be so by those who bore them, and who were justly determined to bear them no longer; were argued against in both Houses of Parliament on the ground of their persecuting character; and the abolition of those most odious distinctions, for the perpetuation of which so many ecclesiastics contended to the last, was received by the millions to whom it was given, not as a boon, but as a part of their just rights, which had been so long, and so nefariously kept from them. Indeed it is instructive to mark the gradual mitigation, the retreat, of the persecuting principle, from the bloody severity in which it once appeared, to its feeble remains in the existing Establishments of religion. In the plenitude of its power it commits the heretic to the gibbet, or the flames. Next, it is denied the blood, but is permitted to prey on the liberty and the substance of its victim; it fines, it imprisons, it banishes, it passes "five mile, and conventicle acts." This also becomes intolerable, and a third abatement is obtained; and then it can only exclude from place, emolument, and power, by disqualifying laws, by test and corporation acts, all declared necessary for the safety of the Church and the state. But these too must

be renounced, and then nothing remains but to affix some stigma, and to retain exclusive support; the former by such legalized names, in invidious contrast, as "holy orders, and pretended holy orders—clergymen, and ministers—church and meeting," or by virtual disqualification, when legal has ceased; the latter by compulsory exactions from all for the support of the favoured party. In all these various forms and stages, in all these descending degrees, the persecuting principle is the same in its nature. It is the principle of unjust violence for the sake of conscience, progressively mitigated and restrained, but still existing and acting. Had it never existed, persecution had been unknown; nor will persecution cease, but by its final extinction.

In looking to the religious Establishments of this kingdom, the first character that strikes us is the inequality of the law that appoints them. Observe Ireland, and say whether the arrangement is equal, by which a rich handful are exclusively supported, at the expense of the multitude in poverty; by which legal, perhaps military violence, compels the many to support the few. Is justice done to Ireland?—Look next to England; and ask whether justice can sanction her present, any more than her past ecclesiastical arrangements; the law by which the rich minority receives exclusive support, and by which the poor majority must first support their own institutions, and, next, be compelled to contribute to the support of their rich neighbours. That a majority of the people of Scotland belong to the Established Church does not alter the nature of the injustice. Take it locally. Examine it in Edinburgh, or Glasgow. Probably within the last twenty years, in building and repairing churches, paying interest of money, and supplying certain *deficits*, not less than £100,000 has been paid from the common funds in each of these cities. During this space, the dissenters have been compelled to pay their proportion of these sums, while they have built their own churches, and supported their own worship. Is there justice here? Would it be just to reverse the case;—to disfranchise the Established class, and to treat them as the disfranchised have been treated so long?

We come, then, to the solemn conclusion; Establish-

ments of religion by civil law are unjust; the religious Establishments of this country are unjust; the principle of persecution inheres in all of them; the laws which establish them are unjust; the legislature in passing, or maintaining these laws legislates unjustly; the dissenters have been, and are, the victims of injustice; nor will the laws and the administration of our country, in other respects so admirable, be cleared of the stain of injustice, till these institutions be changed. The force of this conclusion is not felt by dissenters only, but is rapidly extending to the generous breasts of many of our brethren in the Establishments, who are alive to the injustice with which dissenters have been long treated by the state, who are becoming ashamed of the offensive favoritism bestowed on their own Churches, and heartily approve of the efforts now making to have Christian Churches of every name placed on the same level.

There are two replies which have been made to this charge of injustice. The one is shortly stated by Dr. Ranken. He says, "It is dictated by common sense, that every society may prescribe rules for itself. And if a majority of a nation shall choose to fence in its Church and state . . . who has any right to complain?"* But may not a majority err as well as a minority? May not a state pass unjust laws? Has not every subject a right to complain of injustice from a private individual, but much more from the state? Is not injustice so much the more to be complained of, when it is decreed by a law? And should not all, *by peaceable and fair means*, endeavour to have unjust laws reversed?—Bishop Warburton takes rather higher ground, holding that "reward is not one of the sanctions of civil society"—that "the only claim which the subjects have on the magistrate for obedience is protection"—and "that all places of honour and profit in the magistrate's disposal are there . . . in the nature of a *prerogative*, which he may dispose of at pleasure, without being farther accountable than for the having such places capably supplied."† This is too high for modern opinions. It needs no refutation now-a-days; and I only adduce the words of the learned bishop to

* Essay, page 81.

† Alliance, pages 209, 210.

show to what shifts a bad cause, by a cruel necessity, drives the most talented men.

III. Civil Establishments of religion are unscriptural.

This third argument brings us, I am aware, to the most important and decisive view of the question. By the verdict of the scriptures these Establishments must ultimately stand or fall; and every one who owns the authority of divine revelation must consent to an appeal to this supreme tribunal. My conviction is that this appeal must prove fatal to them. The grounds of this conviction I shall now state as succinctly as the nature of the subject will admit.*

It has been thought by some writers disrespectful to the authority of the Old Testament to limit the evidence on this subject to the New; and in the heat and vehemence of controversial writing it has been asserted, that they who thus limit the appeal, set aside virtually the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament. A few words may suffice to correct this mistake. Suppose I hold that the Christian Church is a special institution of Jesus Christ—that it was predicted by the ancient prophets that in the days of the Messiah a new order of things should arise, *new heavens and a new earth created, a new kingdom set up*, and that the writers of the New Testament have asserted that this new order of things has come, and that they have explained its nature; do I invalidate the Old Testament scriptures, because I appeal to the writings of the New Testament for the precise character of that very change which the former foretold, and which the latter professedly record? To render the matter still more evident, suppose particular instances.

* The scriptural argument has been so particularly considered, with the usual ability of the distinguished writer, in a work which has already obtained a circulation far beyond that to which these pages will reach, that the following illustration may be deemed superfluous. But this omission would be inexcusable in a compend. Besides, the same subject will hardly ever present itself to two minds in exactly the same form. Of Mr. Willis' elaborate Discourse on the other side, I shall only say, that if Dr. Wardlaw's Sermon be not considered as a sufficient antidote, the matter is in the Dr.'s hands, not mine. In the mean time, the public will examine both, and form their own decision.

Is it from the Old Testament, or from the New only, that I am to learn the obligation of the first day of the week—the orders of Christian office-bearers—and the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper? Or do I reflect on the inspired authority of the Old Testament writings (an authority expressly sanctioned by Christ and his apostles) when I decline an appeal to the Old Testament for these institutions of the New? I may be mistaken in affirming that the relation of the Christian Church to the civil powers is to be learned only from the New Testament; and I should be inexcusable if I refused to examine any thing in the Old Testament which may even be alleged to bear upon the subject; but surely this mistake would imply nothing having a tendency to subvert the inspired authority of these ancient "oracles of God."

On the alleged evidence from the Old Testament, I shall content myself with making two observations. The first is this—we cannot conclude that an appointment is imperative on the Christian Church, simply because that appointment formed part of the Jewish code, for these obvious reasons—because, on this principle, the whole Jewish code would be obligatory, which is not pleaded for—and because we find many things enjoined and done under that dispensation, which could not, without sin, be repeated now. On these grounds, it will no more follow that *simply because* religion was established by law under the Old Testament, it should be so established under the New, than it will follow that because a hereditary priesthood existed then, it should exist still; or that the Levitical orders should be the model after which a Christian priesthood should be formed; or that idolaters and Sabbath-breakers should still be put to death. Yet how extensive has been the influence of this inconclusive reasoning from what *was* under the law, to what *should be* under the gospel. This was evidently the principle of Knox's reasoning and legislation, against Roman Catholics. It has been the principle of more than one stately but unchristian hierarchy. And I think it is one principle to which the civil legislation respecting the Christian Church, which has so long prevailed, is to be traced. Judaizing has not been confined to a few in the

primitive times. It will not do to tell us that if it is sinful to establish religion by civil authority, then it would never have existed with the approbation of God, even under the Old Testament. Apply this objection to the extermination of the devoted nations—to the hereditary priesthood—to the capital punishment of idolaters and Sabbath-breakers. In cases innumerable, it may be sinful in us to do, without a divine appointment, what, with such an appointment, we are bound to do. When, then, we would examine any part of the Jewish code, with a view to its incorporation with systems either of civil jurisprudence, or Christian ethics, we must try it, not by the mere circumstance that it exists in the Jewish code, but by some character inherent in itself, or by its relation to the law of Christ. Trying the question of Civil Establishments of religion in either way, we give up the argument from Old Testament example; and, in the former case, we examine them by their justice or expediency; in the latter, by their agreement with the spirit and appointments of the New Testament.

My second remark is, *that the specific passages usually adduced from the Old Testament are inapplicable, either on the principle just stated, or as proving more than those who adduce them will admit.* Let us take examples. Dr. Ranken, with others, refers to the cases of Abraham and Melchizedec, arguing the propriety of the union betwixt Church and state from the union of civil and sacred offices in these remarkable persons. Of Abraham he says "the offices of prophet, priest, and king, were thus united in the same patriarch;"—and of Melchizedec, "a neighbouring and cotemporary patriarch, is represented in the same ancient record as king of Salem, and priest of the Most High God. What could be more intimate than such an union of religious and civil authority in the same person?"* But do not these examples prove too much, and therefore nothing, in the argument before us? They go to prove, if they prove anything, that our king might or should, *ex officio*, be a minister of religion; and that our ministers of religion should hold civil offices; in fact that civil and sacred offices should still coalesce in the

* Essay, pages 4, 5.

same persons. This is somewhat more than the English practice of occasionally investing Rectors with a commission of the peace; or granting to Lords Spiritual the powers of Temporal Peers, with a seat in the upper House. Both Dr. Ranken and Dr. M'Crie refer to Nebuchadnezzar; the former to the decree of this oriental despot respecting the worship of his golden image, in these words, "Nebuchadnezzar, too, the king of Babylon, Dan. iii. 1. enforced the national religion by the severest penal laws, *Whosoever falleth not down and worshippeth the image, shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace*"!†*—the latter, with more judgment, quotes his decree respecting the worship of the true God, and, with prudence equal to his judgment, *suppresses the penal enforcement of it*, mentioned in the same verse. "Our argument is confirmed by the consideration that the scripture records *approved examples* of magistrates who were not Jewish, who exercised their authority for the advancement of religion, and the ordinances of God. We find Nebuchadnezzar and Darius publishing decrees to promote the knowledge and worship of the true God among their subjects, and prohibiting them from "speaking any thing amiss against him." Dan. iii. 29. iv. vi. 26.† I know the late Dr. Ranken was a man of too gentle a spirit to desire the rekindling of the fires that piously consumed heretics; nor does any living man wish less than Dr. M'Crie that such savage despotism as he alludes to were employed to propagate true religion, or to destroy its enemies. But if Nebuchadnezzar is not an example to Christian rulers in the latter part of his decree, how do you prove, from the mere record of the decree itself, that he is an example in the first part of it? You must justify this distinction by an appeal either to some general principle, or to the spirit or letter of the New Testament; in either of which cases, you abandon the argument from its record in the Old Testament.

On the same grounds we set aside such passages as the command in the second Psalm, addressed by Jehovah to the proud enemies of his anointed Son, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed ye judges of the earth.

* Essay, page 8.

† Statement, page 128.

Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling"—the predictions in the seventy-second Psalm—and the passage so often quoted from the forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah, "And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their faces toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet." The argument derived from these, and a few similar passages is to this effect;—these magistrates are addressed not as individuals, but as magistrates—in this public character they opposed Christ and his church—and in this public character they are to serve the Lord and favour his cause.* I shall endeavour afterwards to show that the principles which we advocate not only permit, but demand, that rulers and legislators ought to do much, *in their public character*, in favour of religion. Who doubts that it is incumbent upon them to protect all Christian churches from all unjust annoyance, in the exercise of this inalienable right, common to the whole race, of worshipping God according to the dictates of their conscience—and this is no small matter; and that they are under the highest obligations to be religious themselves, and to exercise the whole *moral* influence connected with their public character, to advance the interests of true religion? The question, then, is not, whether, as men, and as public men, they ought to do any thing for religion? since respecting this there is no dispute; but, what should they do, and how should they do it? After you have adduced precepts requiring them to favour religion, and predictions, assuring us that ultimately these precepts shall be obeyed, you have not proved that they ought to employ compulsory legislation to establish and support Christianity. You have no more proved that because these rulers employed civil power to persecute the Church before their conversion, they should employ the same power afterwards in its favour—than because some unconverted military despot employed his soldiery to spread havoc among Christians, he should, when converted, employ the same violence against infidels—or because Saul, when a Jew, breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, it became him,

* Statement, page 130.

when a Christian, to show the same spirit of sanguinary intolerance against their enemies. The question as to the manner and extent of the commanded and predicted countenance to the Church, must be settled by some general principles, or by the New Testament. These general principles I have already stated; to the New Testament, with profound reverence, let us now appeal.

The first and simplest view of the argument is that which is derived from *the silence of the New Testament on the subject*. We shall search its pages in vain for any *express sanction*, (for I choose to put the argument in this form for the present) of compulsory Establishments of Christianity. By *express* sanctions, I refer either to direct appointment, or approved example. Now I am not aware that any passage in the New Testament, however apparently casual, however insulated, has undergone any attempt, by the most sanguine and ingenious of our opponents, the object of which has been to prove that we have, even in one instance, a command, or an example, in the New Testament, expressly sanctioning the institutions in question. Paley, Warburton, Ranken, and I know not how many beside, most frankly concede this much. Now there are some circumstances which render this silence very remarkable, and which, I think, are fitted to produce a strong effect on every unbiassed mind.

In the first place, the subject is confessedly most important. If our opponents are right, the legislative support of Christianity is essential to its prosperity, if not its existence, even in countries in which it has taken the deepest root, and has most extensively overspread society with its influence—as in our own land. Consult the most eminent modern supporters of Establishments, and Dr. Chalmers among the rest, and they will tell you that there is nothing betwixt us and an inundation of heathenism, but the powerful embankments which the civil power throws around the Church. On the other hand, in the belief of their opponents, the connexion of the Church with the state is a copious source from which issues the worst, and most corrupting influences, to which true religion is exposed. Confessedly, then, they are great instruments of good, or of evil. By universal consent they are agents of vast power, against the truth or for the truth;

for preserving or corrupting the gospel; for disseminating the religion of Christ, or arresting its progress in the world. And be it remembered, the instrument to the connection of which with religion such effects are ascribed, has always existed. It was not doubtful whether Christianity should be placed where some form of civil government was established. Is it not strange, that if, by the will of Christ, this instrument was to be employed for the support, the almost necessary support of his religion, no express intimation of his will to this effect should be found in the New Testament?

Then, let it be remembered that the New Testament writers are *very minute in their moral directions*. Take the concluding parts of the Epistles, and see how they descend into details, respecting the duties of men placed in the various conditions and relations of society—of husbands and wives—of parents and children—of masters and servants—of pastors and private members of Churches—of rulers and of subjects. Yet not one command is recorded, directed to rulers, requiring them to employ their power to establish and endow Christianity.

Considering the *ample powers*, compared with the *external circumstances*, of the apostles, this silence is very unaccountable, on the theory of our opponents. From their Divine Master, they received an unrestricted commission to go into all the world, and to preach the gospel to every creature, and to teach men to observe all things whatsoever their Master had commanded. And were not rulers as much bound to do homage to this commission, proceeding from Him who hath power over all flesh, as the poorest and most abject of the people? The apostles became too conspicuous and influential in society to escape the notice of the rulers long; and it was expressly and often foretold by their Master, (and his predictions, we know, were fulfilled to the letter) that they should be brought before rulers and kings for his name's sake; while, in these circumstances, it should be *given them* what to speak. But how did the apostles act, when, in all the plenitude of their inspiration and authority, they stood before rulers and kings, and gave their heaven-inspired testimony? With great power they spake—accusing the Jewish rulers with being the murderers of

the Prince of Life, and calling them to faith in the name of Jesus, and repentance unto life—to the heathen potentates, they preached righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, till they trembled, and they faithfully declared to them the gospel of salvation; but never, in one instance, did they command, or counsel, these authorities, that they should employ their power against the false religion which they supported, and to establish and endow Christianity which they opposed; never, in one recorded case, did they faithfully expose their wickedness in neglecting this the highest of their public duties, or call them to repentance for their iniquity. How shall we account for this? Let candour do its best, and try to account for it. Is this what a friend of Establishments would have expected, or wished? Is it not exactly what a Voluntary Church-man would?

Besides, *the commencement of the new dispensation was the very time when the appointment in question should have been given*. When the Christian institution was appointed by the Author and Finisher of our faith, in his own person, or through the medium of his apostles, it was the precise time when this mode of upholding his Church must have been fixed, if it was to be resorted to at all. When the Mosaic economy was introduced, it was not left doubtful how the state and the Church were to be allied under the theocracy—if indeed, under that economy the Church can be distinguished from the commonwealth. Kings, there were none at that period; and the call of the people for those magistrates was against the will of God. But it is very remarkable, that the regal government demanded by the people, is anticipated in the Mosaic statutes, and the duties of the future magistrate, in regard to religion, are minutely given. Was Christ less faithful than Moses—the Son over his own house than the servant? Let it not be said that the Jewish and heathen rulers were not within the Church, but were hostile strangers, and that, therefore, it was in vain to demand their legislative aid. It is not enough to say in reply, that the hearts of these rulers were in the power of Christ, and that he could have turned them to favour his gospel, even as he turned the heart of Saul of Tarsus, not less hostile than that of any Jewish or heathen ruler,

that thus there might exist somewhere, in Judea, if not elsewhere in the world, the model of at least one Established Church enjoying the sanction of Christ or of his apostles. *That* would have decided the question in perpetuity. This model church, however small, and however soon swept away by Roman invasion, or overthrown by the internal convulsions of the Jewish state as it expired, would have lived in the pages of revelation, to guide the arrangements of Christian states and Churches while the world lasts. But for this *desideratum* we have a blank. I go farther, however, and ask, why the duty of the rulers, which certainly was not dependent on their prejudices and inclinations, was not distinctly laid down, that there might have been found in the Christian code, as there was in the Jewish, an authoritative provision for the period when Christian princes should appear? Besides, it was at the time of the introduction of Christianity alone, that such an authoritative provision *could be given*. Then inspiration was vouchsafed, and miracles attesting inspiration. But that period of extraordinary revelation was short. Inspiration was soon to cease, miracles to disappear, and the canon of scripture to be completed. If, then, an imperative communication of the will of Christ respecting the support of the civil powers to his church was to be given at all, it was to be given then; otherwise this usage, deprived of his authority, and delayed till the ordinary channels of its communication had been finally discontinued, must be classed, as far as express authority is concerned, with those injurious and human additions to Christianity, which are stigmatized as "the doctrines and commandments of men."

To this reasoning it is unsatisfactory to reply, that it was the Divine will that Christianity should at first make its way in the world without the aid of human laws, that thus its power might be the more clearly manifested: because admitting the full force of what is alleged, that the propagation of Christianity, without civil aid, and even in opposition to human power, forms one of the evidences of its divine origin, the question remains unanswered, Why, in the period of inspiration, no prospective provision was made for the future intervention of

the civil power, when, it is contended, that intervention should be wanted?

Nor is it a satisfactory reply to say, that the presence of miracles accounts for the absence of civil aid, but that that aid should be wanted when miracles were to cease. It has always appeared to my mind strange that any judicious friend of Establishments should lay weight on this consideration, or should gravely name it at all; for in no view can we consider the place of miracles as supplied by Civil Establishments. 1. Miracles were the seal of God to the truth of the doctrines and mission of those by whose instrumentality they were wrought. The works done by Christ bore witness of him that the Father sent him. By the wonders done by the apostles, the Lord gave testimony to the word of his grace. But there is nothing in a Civil Establishment of religion to shew that the system established is true. It shews that it has, or has once had, the approbation of man, but not that it has ever had the approbation of God. Legislative acts, as Mr. Hall has remarked, can add nothing to the evidence, and, therefore, nothing to the power of religion; but, on the contrary, by the appearance of human authority and dictation, which such acts carry on their front, they rather excite prejudice and provoke resistance. I fear that the mere concession that Christianity now needs these Establishments for its support, would do more against its interests, than they could possibly effect in its favour. 2. Miracles arrested popular attention to the ministry of those by whom they were wrought, which the history of their operation by our Lord and his apostles very fully illustrates; the miracles attracting crowds, from the mere impulse of curiosity, who were in some degree predisposed, from the effect of the miracles, to listen with interest and awe to the instructions of men whose powers and recommendations were so extraordinary. But what tendency has an Establishment of Christianity by human law to effect this? The recommendation of the state may be given to the weakest, as well as the ablest; to the basest, as well as the best. The slave of fashion, the tame admirer of power and greatness, the interested aspirant after place and emolument, may be attracted by religion when she is decked

in the liveries, and glitters with the insignia of the state; but what is *their* attachment worth? Has it not a stronger tendency to produce disgust, than imitation? And is not religion, thus attired, apt to gain followers, rather for her adventitious appendages, than her own intrinsic excellence and charms? 3. Establishments of religion are professedly intended to provide for the office-bearers of the Christian Church a competent maintenance, and to afford them the fullest support of the law in the exercise of their functions. Is there any analogy here betwixt Establishments of religion and miracles? In some instances, the awe with which the beholders were struck by the manifestations of miraculous power, may have restrained for a season the fury of the enemies of the Church; but far from securing permanent protection, the miracles of Christ and his apostles contributed to excite the rage, and draw down upon them the vengeance, of the Jewish authorities. Then, as to support;—the poorest of our missionaries, or of our pastors, are rich compared with Christ and his apostles. “The Son of man had not where to lay his head.” The apostles had “neither silver nor gold;” and the man who was not behind the chiefest of the apostles, labouring more abundantly than they all, often wrought with his own hands for his daily bread, and was occasionally in want of all things. Christ performed miracles for the supply of the wants of the multitudes who followed him, never for the supply of his own; nor, invested though they were with power over nature, were the apostles directed to exercise that power to enrich themselves, or even to provide for their own sustenance. 4. It was in the midst of miraculous manifestations—the plagues which desolated Egypt, the separation of the Red Sea, the terrors of Sinai, and all the wonders in the wilderness—that the Jewish theocracy was introduced; and had any provision by human legislation been intended by Christ for the New Testament Church, no objection to the introduction of that provision could have arisen from similar miracles; while, as we have seen, on other grounds, the period of miraculous manifestation was the only fit season for its authoritative appointment.

In this part of the argument *I have assumed* that the

New Testament affords no express authority for the compulsory support of religion; but before proceeding to another step in the same argument, I must advert to the attempts, obviously futile though I think they are, to adduce the semblance of a proof of direct New Testament authority upon this subject.

The parabolical language of our Saviour, “compel them to come in, that my house may be filled,” Luke xiv. 23. has been adduced only by those whom sound, rather than sense, guides in their capricious interpretations of the scriptures, and of whom the enlightened advocates of Establishments will be ashamed—as if physical violence, not entreaty and powerful persuasion, were prescribed by our Lord—as if men were literally to be *cudgelled* into the membership of the Church, and to the communion-table itself.

From the passage in 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. “I exhort, therefore, that first of all, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; *that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty,*” it has been argued that there is an implied duty on the part of the magistrate to enforce the practice of *godliness*, as well as of honesty.* To every reader I may leave it to determine whether this interpretation is not an assumption; and whether the passage means more than this, that it might please God, in answer to the prayers of his persecuted church, so to dispose the hearts of rulers, as that Christians might be permitted to observe the ordinances of his worship without molestation, and might be encouraged to live in all good conscience toward God and toward man?—or, to use the words of one sufficiently well affected toward Established Churches, “that feeling as good subjects, we may be suffered to lead an undisturbed and peaceable life, while we worship the true God, and honestly perform every civil and social duty.”†

The only other passage (with the exception of some predictions in the close of the Apocalypse, on which I shall not presume to offer any comment) which has been

* Dr. M'Crie's Statement, page 139.

† M'Knight in *loc.*

generally adduced, is the following: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on him that doeth evil." Rom. xiii. 1—4. In arguing from this passage for compulsory legislation respecting the Christian Church, it seems to be taken for granted that by the phrase "that which is good," the apostle means *obedience in general*, both in worship and morals—that, therefore, the magistrate has superintendence over both—and that both should consequently be enforced by his authority. But let the two following considerations be attended to. 1. The apostle speaks very evidently of the powers that then were. Did these powers enforce the duties of Christian worship? 2. *Doing evil*, in this passage, is co-extensive with *doing good*; and on the man that *doeth evil* his sword descends, and he *executes wrath*. Are we then back once more to penal laws, and to the extermination of heretics? What can be plainer than that the apostle does not treat of any supposed power of the magistrate respecting Christianity, (nor is his silence on such a power, when writing of the duties of civil functionaries, to be overlooked) but relieves the Christian mind from all anxiety as to the lawfulness of obeying even bad magistrates in lawful things, enjoins this obedience, assures them that it is the will of God they should conscientiously render it, and reminds them that civil government is of the utmost advantage to men, constituted as it is for the prevention and punishment of crime, and the promotion of social order? "For want of other proof, they will needs wrest that place of St. Paul, Rom. xiii. to set up civil inquisition, and give power to the magistrate both of civil judgment, and punishment in causes ecclesiastical. But let us see with what strength

of argument; "let every soul be subject to the higher powers." First, how prove they that the apostle means other powers, than such as they to whom he writes were then under; who meddled not at all in ecclesiastical causes, unless as tyrants and persecutors? And from them, I hope, they will not derive the right of magistrates to judge in spiritual things. How prove they, next, that he entitles them here to spiritual causes, from whom he withheld, as much as in him lay the judging of civil? 1 Cor. vi. 1, &c. If he himself appealed to Cæsar, it was to judge his innocence, not his religion.*

But I proceed with the scriptural evidence. It is not enough to assert that the New Testament is *silent* as to any appointment for civil legislation on behalf of Christianity, it must be remarked farther, *That it contains positive appointments, illustrated by apostolical example, that the support of Christianity was to be accomplished by other means.* In this part of the argument, it will be observed, the proof is limited to the *pecuniary support* of Christianity. The contributions of those who willingly offer—of those particularly who have experienced the value of the blessings which Christianity confers, and recognize as supreme law the authority of Him who having bled for their ransom, lives as their Lord and their King—these are the appointed revenues of the kingdom of Christ upon earth. That these voluntary contributions are expressly appointed—that they are appointed as expressly as Prayer, or the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper—that the appointment has the same appearance of permanence as that of those ordinances—that no indication is given of a period when another order of things should arise, when this original and divinely instituted mode of supporting Christianity should be supplanted by another better and more efficient, than is given that Baptism and the Lord's Supper should give place to some other and more efficacious rites—that this appointment is not only recorded, but vindicated, on the high ground of its intrinsic fitness and equity, as not being merely arbitrary, but founded on justice, and goodness, and wisdom—that there is as much reason to

* Milton's Prose Works, vol. iii, page 327.

conclude from the record, that this appointment is honouring to the Lord Jesus, and for the best interests of his church, as the positive institutions to which I have adverted, and that the abolition of the one, and the substitution, by human authority, of others in their room, would be dishonouring to the Redeemer and injurious to his church, as a similar change in regard to the latter would be—and, finally, that this appointment given by Christ, reiterated and recorded by his inspired apostles, was acted upon by the primitive churches, and by the apostles themselves, all these are matter of fact, not more disputable than that the inspired record exists. When our Lord sent forth the first labourers, he commanded them to receive their support from those among whom they laboured; and rested his command upon this principle, universally acknowledged in society, “the labourer is worthy of his hire,” Luke x. 3—8. The apostle Paul lays down this divine appointment for the Christian ministry, more fully in 1 Cor. ix. 1—14. from which long passage I extract the following sentences. “Who goeth a warfare at any time on his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man, or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt this is written, that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” In this passage, the duty of properly supporting the ministers of the gospel—their support from the field in which they labour, the vineyard which they cultivate, the temple in which they minister, the altar at which they serve—the equity, and reasonableness of this arrangement, placing as it does the support of the

Christian ministry on the same ground on which fair paction, or the sense of justice, places the support of the labourer in any order in society—and the express appointment of the Lord, fixing and sanctioning this equitable arrangement, for his own honour, and the interest of his Church, are expressly and plainly taught. But is not “the law,” referred to; and did not the Jewish law appoint tithes? Yes; God appointed tithes from the eleven tribes, for the support of the twelfth, who had no other inheritance; but the hereditary priesthood and the tithes have passed away together; nor is there one sentence in the New Testament which alludes to their permanence. In these sentences, it is not so much the tithes that are referred to, as the oblations at the temple, and the altar, of which the priests were partakers. Besides, the tithes were appointed to be paid by those only for whom the priesthood ministered; and that was for all Israel. Had there been six of the twelve tribes at liberty to have priests of their own, would these six tribes have been commanded to pay tithes for the priests of the other six, and for their own also? In addition to all, the tithes were commanded of God, but were not to be exacted by legal distraits, and military violence.—But again, does not the apostle refer to *soldiers*? And does not the whole state pay for the troops? He refers to the pay of soldiers, but only as far as it serves the purpose of his own argument, which is, that soldiers are supported not by their own private resources, but by those who employ them in their warfare. But he no more refers, (nor does the purpose of the illustration require it,) to forced taxes for the pay of the military, than he does to the military plunder of conquered enemies, to which successful warfare has resorted in all ages.

In the same spirit of equitable and wise appointment is the following apostolical precept, “Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things,” Gal. vi. 6. In these words we have an injunction possessing the same inspired authority as the other precepts with which it is connected, having nothing in its character implying that it should be of less permanent obligation; but on the contrary resting on such a

basis of righteousness and fitness, as suits all times and all places, equally with the primitive age, and the local condition of the Galatian churches.

But it is plain that the introduction into the Christian Church of the power of human law, compelling men, whether they are willing or unwilling, whether they belong to the Church in whose favour this coercive power is employed, or are without her pale, whether they believe her creed and observe her worship, or reject both, it is plain that the introduction of this power is the abolition of Christ's appointment; is the substitution of a human expedient in the room of a divine ordinance; an expedient which rests on far other grounds than the appointment which it profanely sets aside; which renders the contribution for Christian ordinances the reluctant product of legal compulsion, not the free-will offering of Christian submission and love; which brings within the Church a foreign and most injurious influence, that with the most jealous vigilance should be kept out; and which, in as far as it operates, effectually prevents or destroys the excellent results of the wise, reasonable, and gracious appointment of our Lord.

I shall finish this outline of the argument from scripture with this additional thought, *that the employment of legal force in support of Christianity, is hostile to the whole spirit of the New Testament.* There is no command for the employment of it—there is no promise or prediction that it should be introduced—there is no regret for the want of it—the subject has no place in the New Testament code. The kingdom which Christ proclaimed and founded, is *the kingdom of heaven*; and, indeed, heaven itself has not less of the violence and the penalties of human law, than this celestial institution exhibits. The authority of Christ, the presence and the power of Christ, are all in all, in the Church below, as in the Church above. What can be more spiritual, more remote from the coarse earthliness of coercive human enactments, more celestial and godlike, than the following commission, “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching

them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20. The supreme power and authority of the Lord of the Church—his high sanction of his own gospel, of the Christian ministry, and of the ordinances and commandments of the Christian system—his presence in the exercise of his truth, and love, and power, where his gospel and his ordinances are administered, these are the influences by which his Church exists, and prospers, not an alliance with the kingdoms of this world, or the unbefitting interposition of their authority and power.

To the same purpose is the well-known comprehensive testimony, given by our Lord to the nature of his kingdom, and of its distinction and separation from the kingdoms of this world—“My kingdom is not of this world.” In the scriptures, as in human writings, the same set of words has not always exactly the same meaning; and it is an understood principle of interpretation, that the sense may, for the most part, be determined by the connection in which the phrase occurs. Taken by themselves, these words would naturally suggest, that the Church of Christ is unlike the kingdoms of this world, in its origin, its laws, and its design; these kingdoms being of human institution—their laws of human formation, and partaking of human infirmity and error—and having no higher ends than the present interests of men. His kingdom is from above, “the kingdom of God, and of heaven”—its institutions are perfect, and divine—and it contemplates and secures the spiritual happiness, the eternal salvation, of all its true subjects. Thus employing similar language of himself and his followers in the preceding chapter, our Lord had said, “they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” But let us mark the connection; and we shall find in the passage certain circumstances connected with this testimony, which lead us to understand the words as implying the exclusion of secular power from the concerns of Christ's kingdom. “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, *then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.* Pilate, therefore, said un-

to him, Art thou a king, then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world *that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice,*" John x. viii. 36, 37. In opposition to the Jewish charge, that Christ, by making himself a king, spake against Cæsar, he shows that *Cæsar's province and his were separate*, Cæsar having nothing to do in the province over which he was king. His kingdom *does not require, nor admit of violence*, such as the Jews thought the Messiah would employ, such as the Jewish multitudes, who recently followed him, could have employed at his command. Finally, *these two considerations are explained thus*: Jesus is a king in proclaiming "the truth," that is, his gospel, "the gospel of the kingdom," often called by him "the truth;" he came into the world to bear witness, with authority, to this truth; this truth is the law of his kingdom: and his subjects are those, who, from homage to him, "hear his voice," that is, receive and obey the truth which he has taught. Such are the circumstances connected in the passage with the great testimony itself, "My kingdom is not of this world." A kingdom which employed no authority such as Cæsar employed—which availed itself of no force, such as the multitudes expected, and such as these multitudes might have been employed by Christ to exert—which governed men by the authority and evidence of divinely attested truth, to which Cæsar's authority could add nothing; such are the characters of Christ's kingdom, which this testimony, explained by its connection clearly includes. And I may ask, whether if the kingdom of Christ required the intervention of civil law for its establishment—if its doctrines and institutions were to be enforced by royal and legislative enactments—if men were to be coerced by the authority and the vengeance of law to contribute to the support of its institutions—and if compliance with these civil enactments were to be the path-way to temporal emolument and honour, the testimony could have been given, and given in the circumstances in which it was uttered, by the King of truth, "My kingdom is not of this world?"

Very similar to this declaration of Jesus is the following in the writings of Paul, respecting the only legitimate

influence in the Church which the gospel recognizes, which I quote with this one remark, that the word "carnal" does not denote, as it often does, *that which is morally corrupt*; but, (as appears from the contrast instituted in the passage itself,) *human violence of any kind*. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

The conclusion, then to which these remarks conduct us, is this; taking the New Testament for our guide, we perceive no trace of any precept, any example, any intelligible indication of the will of Christ for the employment of civil law to enforce the support of Christianity—that Christ and his apostles have appointed the voluntary contributions of its friends for the support of the Christian religion, resting this appointment, not on divine authority alone, but also on its intrinsic equity, and fitness—and, finally, the opposition of the spirit and the maxims of the New Testament, to the employment of civil force for the support of the gospel. On these grounds we assert, that the highest authority to which man can appeal, is resisted, by the employment of compulsory legislation for upholding the religion of Jesus.

Objections to the views which I have presented shall be afterwards considered; but there is one, which may, with more propriety be introduced here, from its immediate connexion with the position which I have just been endeavouring to establish. The objection is to this effect; "whatever may be alleged respecting those early appointments and usages, they are insufficient now; if the ministers of the gospel are not supported by the state, they will not be duly supported at all; the Christian ministry will rapidly fall into contempt, and Christianity itself will fall with its ministry." The writers to whom I have repeatedly alluded are very copious in their declamation on this topic, and probably no one is more so, than our respected countryman Dr. Chalmers. Now, if the preceding reasoning be correct, I deny that any cir-

cumstances can justify the compulsory intervention of laws for the endowment of the Christian ministry, on this general ground, that if the members of the Church fail to obey an institution of Christ, the Church is not at liberty to drop that institution and supply its place by one of its own invention. The Church must faithfully adhere to the ordinances and commandments of the Lord Jesus, rejecting every substitutionary expedient, however specious, and persuaded that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." The case of the apostles proves, that if the resources appointed by Christ should, for a time, prove scanty, or fail, it is incumbent on the ministers of the gospel to resort to bodily or mental labour to supply the deficiency, and to do so with humility and cheerfulness, rather than invoke the brute force of law, to compel contributions, which the authority of Christ and the remonstrances of men, have failed to draw forth. But that such a substitute of a human device for Christ's own ordinance, implying as it does, so much distrust of the power and faithfulness of the Lord of the Church, and so much opposition to his express authority, should be vindicated, and declared necessary to the prosperity, or the existence of the Christian Church, is fitter far for the mouth of the infidel, than for that of the Christian, or the Christian divine. Leave it to the enemy of Christianity to vaunt, "If the secular arm do not uphold your religion, it will fall and perish—its strength is in your statute-book—the soldiery is its rampart—in the wealth which you compel a reluctant people to lavish on its structures, and its dignitaries, in the stigma with which you contrive to brand all who deviate from the national belief, in the road which conformity opens to the gratification of vanity, ambition, or lucre, lies the mighty potency of its charms—leave your religion to itself, as ours is left—give us a fair arena, and let us meet it on equal terms, and we will show you that the contest will neither be long nor doubtful, and that the triumph of our cause will be easy and complete." To the boasting infidel leave such language as this; but never let it be heard from Christian lips. What!—if you want courage to trust to the simple provisions of the Lord Jesus, and

to his blessing to render them effectual, look to facts, and gather confidence. Think of the three centuries, during which, unaided by secular power, Christianity spread with a rapidity, and achieved triumphs, unknown in any other period of her history, even to this day—reflect on the preservation for many ages of the small remnant of the faithful, who kept the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, while the protected and endowed Church was apostate—observe how British dissenters, amidst all the repression of penal laws, disqualifying statutes, public indignities, and the constant influence of Establishments tending to uproot from the breasts of Christians all sense of their obligation to support religion by voluntary oblations, have now increased to millions—look to the spread of Christianity in every quarter of the world, by Bible and Missionary Societies, within the last forty years, all of them resting exclusively on voluntary support—above all, turn your eyes to the New World, and contemplate the refreshing, the magnificent spectacle, of a mighty people, within whose territories the compulsion of force for the sake of religion is unknown, relying on the sure efficacy of the simple appointment of Christ, and provided with the means of Christian instruction and worship, *far beyond any other country on the face of the whole earth*; and if these facts do not suffice to re-assure your confidence, and to put your doubts and fears to flight, your case must be hopeless.

In illustration of these remarks, I have great pleasure in extracting the following paragraph from the pages of a writer now familiar to an admiring public, whose high talents are only outshone by his personal virtues, and of whom it may be truly said, "*Nihil tetigit quod non ornavit.*" "The voluntary principle is a moral power which rapidly increases from being acted upon. Paley was greatly ignorant of the state of primitive Christianity, when he asserted, "to the scheme of voluntary contribution there exists this insurmountable objection, that few would ultimately contribute any thing at all." Whereas the reverse was the case in the primitive Church—the early Christians erred in contributing too much. Besides relieving the persecuted, the sick, and the afflicted, and

encouraging, from too indiscriminate almsgiving, a number of impostors, they enriched to such an extent their office-bearers and bishops, that long before even persecution had ceased, they made the eminent situations of their Churches tempting objects for the disgraceful rivalry of worldly cupidity, and secular ambition. The truth is, the Church of Christ was corrupted by wealth long before it was corrupted by power."*

IV. I argue against Civil Establishments of religion from their bad tendency and effects.

If I have succeeded in proving the truth of the preceding considerations, this last may be regarded as a consequence from them; for if Civil Establishments of religion imply usurpation, on the part of the legislature, of powers which no legislature rightfully possesses—if they are essentially unjust—and if they are unscriptural, their tendency cannot be doubtful, and their effects must show what that tendency is.

These Establishments, it may be remarked, first, *fail to accomplish the ends for which they have been constituted*. These, as pleaded for by their defenders, are, the religious instruction of the nation, and national uniformity in religion.† But have our Establishments accomplished either of these objects, or do they tend to accomplish them? As to the former, I suppose these two things will not be disputed—a great proportion of the instruction given in the Established Churches is nominal, not real, being poison, rather than wholesome aliment, or a withholding to starvation rather than a supplying of mental food—and, next, the great body of the empire, of those at least who seek and get religious instruction, derive it, not from the Established Churches, but from other sources, choosing rather to pay for it elsewhere, than enjoy it there for almost nothing.—As to the other end, *uniformity in religion*, every candid man, who knows any thing of the subject, will admit, that in this respect the Establishments have been total failures. There is no approach to this uniformity. In the Church of Scotland, the Moderates

* Address, &c. by James Douglas, Esq. of Cavers.

† See Paley, &c.

and the Orthodox have been long arranged under certain leaders, and in opposite and conflicting bands; the former notoriously including a great diversity of sentiment, and, as a whole, always outnumbering the latter. Of the seventeen thousand clergymen of all names and orders in the English Establishment, not a tithe hold the Calvinism which is taught in their Articles, nor are even moderately evangelical, as the best men in that Church believe and lament; nor can we peruse such well-known works as those of Tillotson, Barrow, Butler, Paley, Watson, Marsh, Mant. Scott, or Newton, without being struck with the great diversity of creed which exists, and is taught, in the Church of England. The uniformity, then, is that of a name, but no more; it is a thing of sound only, not even of visible appearance; it may impose on the ear, but the eye detects it. Indeed, an analysis of sentiment, resulting from intimate knowledge, would probably shew as great a variety of conflicting opinions, on the most momentous subjects, within as without the pale of the Episcopalian Church. A more heterogeneous mass, under the same cover, was never found in one package. Of the Church of Ireland, as effecting the religious instruction of that country, or of its uniformity in any thing save its exactions, I need say nothing. Hated by the country which it has so long afflicted and spoiled, and in which military violence alone preserves its tottering existence, and now become the scorn of an indignant empire, that insult to the name of even a National Church must speedily disappear.

But, besides, Civil Establishments *tend to corrupt religion and to counteract its progress, by the secular influence which they introduce into the Church*. It may be assumed, that the state will not encumber itself with the Church, with its creed, with its structures, with the support of its clergy, with its complaints and its petitions, without some very tangible equivalents, and these probably of a description which the Church ought not to pay. These equivalents are generally such as the following—*accommodation in the matter of discipline*, by throwing open her gates, without scruple, for the admission of her rulers, and their dependents and followers, to her most sacred privileges—the understood or avowed *exercise of influence*,

by secular patronage, in the distribution of her livings, and the government of her affairs—with *subserviency and devotion* on her part, to the state, on which she rests. These matters are brought out by Warburton, somewhat strongly and offensively perhaps, but with much truth, at least as far as England is concerned. This bold and learned ecclesiastic does not adduce it *as a charge*, but pleads and argues for it, *as a fact*, and *as a duty*, that the Church (which no man shows more clearly than he, is naturally independent of the state) in forming her alliance with it, agrees by paction, that in return for her *endowment*, and the *coactive power* lent to her by the state, she “resigns up her independency, and makes the magistrate her supreme head, without whose approbation and allowance, she can administer, transact, or decree nothing.”* This is speaking out. He goes on to vindicate the Church for making the king her head, showing how fine a thing it is for the Church to have a crowned head, and sternly contending, (the following are his words) “that no ecclesiastic of the National Church can exercise his function, without the magistrate’s appointment and allowance—that no convocation or synod has a right to sit, without express permission of the civil magistrate—and that no member of the Established Church can be excommunicated, or expelled the society, without the consent and allowance of the magistrate.” Nor is this surrender of her independence enough for the benefits of a state alliance; for the bishop adds, that the Church must bestow “additional reverence and veneration on the person of the civil magistrate, and on the laws of the state,” and must “engage to apply its utmost endeavours to serve the state.” In the Church of England, accordingly, no attempt is made to separate the precious from the vile, as far as admission to Christian membership is concerned; and thus men are lulled into self-deception, and false security, by the possession of a nominal and worthless Christianity. And who knows not that by the appointment of the bishops—by the crown patronages—by the livings in the gift of the aristocracy, or of the bishops, state influence is as universal in the English Church as

* Alliance, page 147.

bishop Warburton could desire. It is, indeed, a great state engine, constructed and kept moving for purposes of state; a disciplined ecclesiastical army, under the authority of the crown, as truly as the military. Now and then the machine may creak, and work harshly, and become somewhat unmanageable from the neglect of a due supply of oil to its ponderous wheels, or the rude experiments of some meddling under-workers—symptoms of mutiny may appear among the officers, or in the ranks, from the dismissal of some favourite general, or the stoppage of pay, or a threatening of reduction. But keep the machine in its old condition, oil it abundantly, attempt no new experiments, and it will go on performing its huge and fantastic movements, as in the olden time—let the troops have their old commanders, give them their pay, provoke them with no threatened reductions, gratify them with their holiday dresses and evolutions, and his Majesty may count upon them as long as he lives. Alas!—what the Church has suffered from this surrender of the liberty wherewith her Redeemer hath made her free—this servile prostration at the shrine of wealth and power—this sale of her birthright for a mess of meat!—When will she have the virtue to abandon her ruinous alliance, for the sake of which she has vilely cast her honours away, reassert her original purity and independence, and bow to no other name, than the name of Jesus!—In Scotland, things are better. The Scottish Church never owned the king as her Head—and may she never!—and never surrendered the independence of her courts and her discipline. But the unhallowed influences have found their way into Scotland also. It were easy, but not pleasant, to show how they have stolen in, and what havoc they have wrought. Let the case of patronage suffice, as an example—of patronage, in the train of which so many evils have followed. At this moment this evil is denounced by many of the best men in the Church of Scotland, as “unscriptural and sinful;” but what follows? Is this “sinful and unscriptural” thing renounced at all costs? Is entrance into the pastoral relation, or connexion with the state itself, declined, rather than comply with this invasion of the rights of the Christian people, this “sinful and unscriptural” usurpation in the Church;—rather than “do this evil that

good may come?" No such thing. What has been *in practice*, exists in practice as ever—the king—the town council—the private lay patron, repeat the evil as they have been accustomed to do—congregations bow to it—ministers of the gospel coincide with it, in receiving gratefully the patron's grant, as the necessary pre-requisite to the call, or the induction—and the Church puts herself into the abject condition of a petitioner to the legislature to redress an evil which she should abolish herself. How much more dignified, how much more scriptural, to sever by one act the connection, from which nothing but evil has resulted, or will result; and thus at once lay the axe to the root, in place of cropping the twigs, or lopping off some branches. In this way alone, it is probable, will the evil ever be cured; for an Established Church, without royal or aristocratical patronage, is an anomaly of which history affords no record.

Still farther, Civil Establishments of religion have a *tendency to persecution*. One principle on which the Church solicits the sanction of the state is the connection betwixt true religion, and the ends for which good government is instituted, to secure moral order, and temporal happiness. But if this connection betwixt true religion and the interests of society, (which is unquestionable) be admitted as a reason why true religion should receive the sanction of civil law, and a Christian Church should be supported by the state, is it not also a reason why false religion, which subverts morality, and does more to injure even the present happiness of mankind than all other causes combined, should be repressed? The second seems as fair and as evident as the first of these corollaries; and all the earliest and ablest pleaders for Establishments did in fact argue as strongly for the *legal suppression of all heresies*, as for the legal establishment of the true religion, and endowment of the true Church. Hence the alliance betwixt legal establishments of religion and intolerance—hence penal laws—hence real or virtual disqualification—hence the fact, that every exclusive Civil Establishment of Christianity has persecuted. In the form of compelling the support of a system from which we derive no benefit, which applies to dissenters universally, and in grievous vexations for conscience' sake,

endured by the millions of English dissenters, persecution by the Establishments exists to this day; while that wrath and malignity which the present discussions have already drawn forth so abundantly, (not by any means universally in the Established Churches, for by very many in those communions the discussions to which I allude are welcomed, and the principles advanced by the dissenters approved, or favourably listened to) in well known quarters, the persecuting spirit seems to live and operate with nearly all its pristine vigour and activity. To these manifestations I may apply the language of Hall, with slight change of expression. "Till this business was agitated, however, we were not aware of our labouring under such a weight of prejudice. Confiding in the mildness of the times, and conscious that every trace of resentment was banished from our breasts, we fondly imagined that those of Churchmen were equally replete with sentiments of candour and generosity. We accordingly ventured" to bring forward "our claims as men, and as citizens; but had not proceeded far, before we were assailed with the bitterest reproaches Their opposition was more violent than was expected. They let us see that however languidly the flame of their devotion may burn, that of resentment, and party spirit, like vestal fire, must never be extinguished in their temples These evils "are often mitigated by the virtue of" members of the Establishments; "and among the English clergy in particular," (and let the Scottish have their just share of the tribute) "as splendid examples of virtue and talents might be produced, as any which the annals of human nature can afford; but in all our reasonings concerning *men*, we must lay it down as a maxim, that the greater part are moulded by circumstances. If we wish to see the true spirit of a hierarchy, we have only to attend to the conduct of what is usually termed the High Church party."

But the worst aspect of Establishments is *their tendency to diffuse irreligion and impiety*. Next to the excellence and the evidence of the gospel itself, nothing contributes so much to its diffusion as the influence of its heavenly doctrines on those who profess to receive them. The spiritual system itself may be very imperfectly discerned,

but it will be seen embodied in the living character of its ministers, and professed friends. But looking generally at our Establishments, what does the observer perceive? He sees at once that it cannot be *any one system* which the state approves, for Popery, Episcopacy, and Presbytery, all bask in its favour, and share its endowments; and, to a reflecting observer, it will not appear more consistent, that the systems thus favoured are locally separated, one in Canada, another in England and Ireland, a third in Scotland, than if they co-existed in the same locality, and all the three were established in London, Dublin, or Edinburgh. He will observe farther, that it cannot be *any one system* which is meant to be supported in *any one* of these Churches; since all the world knows that in the one Episcopalian Church, for example, you will find as many opinions as you can fancy, and thus a real variety of creeds is equally supported, though under one delusive name. It cannot be *any love to the system established*, that has won for it the endowment of the state, for it is obvious that it is subordinated by the state to its own secular purposes, not to objects of piety. What must be the influence on the mind of the observer, of the great body of the teachers of religion solemnly subscribing what they neither believe nor teach—of the buying and selling of livings, like any other marketable commodity—of the clergy, by thousands, binding themselves to duties which they never perform—of exacting the hire, but refusing the labour? Then the cry is ever ringing in his ears, “if the state do not support this system, it must perish;” and when discussion gets active, and change is demanded, with one voice “the clergy exclaim their Church is in danger, speaking broad, as Mr. Burke says, and meaning only that their emoluments are endangered.” What is the man to infer from all this? Judging of Christianity, not as it is in itself; not as it appears in its divine simplicity, majesty, and holiness, in the word of God; but as it is seen in this corporation which calls itself *the Church*, he comes to the fatal conclusion—it is all imposition together—it seems to be a great government job—a piece of complicated priestcraft—the priests themselves do not believe what they swear to—the people do not believe it—and the

difference betwixt them and us is this, that *we* are honest, and *they* are hypocrites. We know, from their writings, how the excellent of the earth, in the Establishments, perceive and lament this state of things. As it is, I suppose I do not hazard too bold an opinion, when I say, that, probably, of all the causes of infidelity and immorality in the country, the state of the Churches of England and Ireland, (arising, be it observed, mainly from their being state Churches,) may be regarded as the chief. “Hence,” says Hall, speaking of the disagreement between the public creed of the Church, and the private sentiments of its ministers, an evil, he remarks, “not likely to be remedied, before it brings the clerical character into the utmost contempt—hence the rapid spread of infidelity in various parts of Europe; a natural and never-failing consequence of the corrupt alliance between Church and state.”*

SECTION III.

OBJECTIONS.

If the reasoning in the preceding pages be correct, I am not particularly solicitous respecting objections, how-

* It is no objection to this statement to tell us, that evils existed in the Church before Christianity was established, and even while the apostles lived—that evils of great magnitude are found in unestablished Churches—and that the removal of Establishments would not effectually purify the Church. All this is admitted. But the springing up of corruption from other sources does not diminish its amount from this most copious of all; and surely it is enough that the purity of our religion be exposed to contamination from causes inherent in our fallen nature, without adding to them that mighty and most efficient auxiliary, the influence of the state.—One can hardly repress a smile at the simple reply, which is so often made to the call for improvement—“there is nothing perfect, you have faults yourselves”—sage sayings, which would have contained as satisfactory reasons against the Reformation of Luther, or even the preaching of the apostles, as against any correction of abuses in present times. Is our remoteness from the goal of perfection a reason why we should not strive to get nearer it?

ever plausible, that may be brought against it. Of the leading objections, however, I shall take a rapid survey.

Among the writers to whom I have already alluded, Bishop Warburton, and after him Dr. Ranken, tell the opponents of Establishments that they have the common consent of mankind against them. They collect the suffrages of the world, of all ancient and modern nations, and they say they are all against us, with exceptions too trifling to be noticed. This, doubtless, is a formidable array. And as China, it seems, is rather a doubtful case, Dr. Ranken is at great pains to show, that what he calls "the Chinese Church," is really an Established Church! Be it so. Truth must not be determined by the multitude of suffrages in its favour. We trust we have Jesus Christ and his apostles with us. Beyond all dispute, the Christian Church for three centuries, was, in practice at least, as we are. And looking around us at this day, we do not feel that we are few. Be this, however, as it may. "The antiquity and extent of the practice only show the inveteracy of the prejudice."

"But what say you to the Reformers?" We must confess with sorrow that we cannot claim *them*. We should have exulted in having had these great and good men on our side. But they are all against us—Luther—Calvin—Knox, every man of them. But, remember, they were against toleration too. They dismounted the old lady, it has somewhere been quaintly remarked, from the beast on which she rode; but they were too eager to leap into the saddle themselves. They were all against the "intolerable toleration of all religions," as keenly as they were for the establishment of the "true religion," and because they were *for* the latter, they were *against* the former. Let any one consult a well-known work in every theological library, the "*Syntagma Confessionum*," if he wishes proof of this. We must call no man on earth Master.

"Dissenters have no right to intermeddle with the Church; she costs the country nothing; she has her own patrimony; and nobody has a right to it but herself." I believe the public have already overruled this objection, in all its parts, and after counsel has been heard on both sides. Who contribute to the funds that build and repair

churches in Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, Liverpool, and every where? Churchmen and dissenters equally. Who replenish the treasury from which issue government grants, for building government churches, increasing small livings, paying troops for gathering tithes in Ireland, &c.? Then, as to nobody being injured because the Church has a tenth; would any body be injured if she had a half, or the whole? Why is a tenth so harmless? But private individual property! Let that never more be heard of, from the lips of Churchmen particularly! Hear a Layman on the subject. "At the Reformation, the doctrine, that church property is public property, was established beyond any reasonable doubt, by the wealth despoiled from the Church of Rome being applied to the support of principles diametrically opposite to the superstition for whose maintenance these funds had been originally set apart. It would almost surpass belief, that a Protestant clergyman, subsisting on the residue of Popish benefices, could hesitate for a moment to admit that church property is public property, for otherwise what right has he to his present living? which, unless the state had the power to divert it from its original intention, must inalienably have belonged to the Popish priesthood, and he who appropriates their goods to his own use, except upon the principle that church property is public property, is, in terms of his own confession, a robber and spoiler of churches. But by every mite that a Protestant clergyman receives, he acknowledges this principle, that church property is public property, that the legislature has the right to withdraw it from its original purpose, and to assign it to objects diametrically opposite, provided these objects are supposed to coincide with the greatest possible amount of public good."* But, dissenters may still be asked, Do you, after all your noise, really wish a share of the property of the Church? No—but we wish exemption from paying any share of it to you—we wish you to do this fair thing, to support yourselves as we do—we wish the state to dispose of its own property for the benefit of all its subjects, and not bestow it on a portion of the community who are not

* Mr. Douglas's Address.

paupers. Were its continued application to religious purposes determined on by the legislature, it ought to be equally distributed among all parties in the country, for it was originally held, not by a party but by a church which included the whole population. Two results would follow—the Church would have no more claim on the dissenters—and the dissenters giving up, on principle, their portion to the state, it could not be but that the present endowed minority would be forced to follow the example of the unendowed majority.—It is not thus, however, that matters will be adjusted.

“But what would you do with the thinly populated parts of the country? Would you leave them in their poverty, destitute of religious instruction?”—First, if it is to be put on this issue, take the benefit of the objection for a season; renounce your Establishment in the towns and populous districts, where the objection concedes it is not wanted—keep it, if you will, where you say it is needed.—Let this be tried; but if not, why may not the richer help the poorer? This is done in temporal things, why not in spiritual?—See what dissenters, poor as they are, have done in the poorest districts in Wales and in Orkney.—And is not Christ’s appointment, like that gospel which transmits it, applicable to all varieties of place and circumstance?—Thinly populated parts of the country! The less these are brought forward by the defenders of Establishments, the better for themselves.

We are told by Dr. Chalmers, that men are not naturally inclined to receive the gospel, and if you do not anticipate their demands, they will live and die without it.—Did Christ understand this unwillingness of men, or did he not? Did his appointment proceed on a miscalculation, which has at length been detected? “The wisdom of God is wiser than men.” Yes, human depravity is opposed to the gospel; indolence will not arouse itself to examine it; prejudice misinterprets it; pride cannot brook its humbling doctrines; sin hates its purity. The gospel must be brought to men, otherwise they will not seek after it. But is it the most likely way to overcome this aversion, to compel men to pay for the gospel before that aversion is overcome? Then, if the state will form itself into a missionary society, and compel the supply of its

treasury from its subjects of all parties, must it not either support missionaries from all the parties, by whom that treasury is replenished, (and in this case you are brought to the compulsory support of all, even the most conflicting creeds) or commit the injustice of compelling all to support one?

Finally, it is objected, that our doctrine is at war with national schools, a national Sabbath, and, indeed, national religion itself. We deny all these.—There may be universal education, as in America, where there is no Established Church; and there may be the want of such education, as in England, where an Established Church has existed for centuries.—As an institution essential to the welfare of the nation, the Sabbath may be, and ought to be, set apart from secular labour; but it is not pretended that law can compel its religious observance.—Then, as to national religion, you cannot, without violence, without mockery, produce the appearance of religion, unless the people are religious. Rulers should do the following things in favour of religion—they should be religious themselves—they never ought to do any thing inconsistent with religion in their public functions, but should rather relinquish their places, than violate its dictates—in their deliberations they should acknowledge God, who would thus direct their counsels, and favour their undertakings—and, finally, by all appointed means, they should do what they can to promote true religion, in their own dwellings, in their country, and throughout the world. Then, indeed they would be nursing fathers to the Church. A nation blessed with such rulers, and walking in their footsteps, would, indeed, be a Christian nation; and by no other means do we conceive it possible that either rulers or their subjects, can justly attain this honourable name. These, however, are brief suggestions, which merit separate, and full consideration.*

* I may refer for a more ample illustration of the above reply to the well-known writings of Mr. Marshall. Indeed, on what part of the preceding discussion might I not have referred to the productions of that powerful and intrepid writer.

It cannot be too deeply impressed on the minds of dissenters, that, under God, the issue of this great question depends on themselves. They need not dream that their opponents will concede any thing of their own accord; or that the legislature, unasked, and uninfluenced, will renounce their hold of the national Churches. With themselves, therefore, the success of their cause rests; and I have no doubt they possess the means to ensure that success, sooner or later.

They have every inducement to exert themselves. Wronged for centuries, without a cause—enduring their wrongs with a patience bordering on pusillanimity—the long-tried friends of this noblest temporal blessing with which a country can be enriched, civil and religious liberty, is it possible that a British legislature can always shut their ears to their prayers?

They have still holier objects to animate their efforts. The buyers and sellers must be driven out of the temple of our God—the abomination that maketh desolate, standeth where it ought not,” and must be expelled from his sacred territory—the foul treason against Sion’s King, that she has another head than him, must cease for ever. For the spiritual welfare of their fellow-countrymen, for the influence of their religion, for the glory of their Divine Lord, the Church of Christ must be emancipated from the polluting slavery under which she has fallen, and must appear, as at the first, holy and free.

With such objects in view, let British dissenters do what they can, and they shall prevail. Let them be united—let them be steadfast—let them be fearless—above all, let them be tranquil in spirit, possessed with the confidence which piety inspires. In repelling the attacks of their opponents, it is but due to truth, that they give things their proper names. Abuse, slander, scurrility, falsehood, must not be softened down from a squeamish fear of giving offence. But let no injury, past, present, or future, provoke retaliation. Such weapons

our cause needs not, our religion forbids. No law is more imperative than that of our Lord, which we are especially to remember in seasons of temptation—“ Bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Let us own with candour and with cordial delight every excellence that appears in the Established Churches—let us hail with joy every symptom of improvement which they exhibit—let us pray for their prosperity, as we pray for our own. Doing homage to this divine appointment, “ whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing,” let us cooperate with them, if they will cooperate with us, in every good undertaking, which regard to consistency of principle will allow. And let us not doubt, that although in the progress of the discussions that have begun, there will be, to a considerable extent, a collision of feeling, as well as of opinion, the Redeemer’s prayer shall prove more powerful than the passions of his weak and imperfect followers, and the delightful consummation for which he makes intercession shall be accomplished, “ that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” “ For a time it is to be feared there must be conflict and confusion. But from disorder, order will arise. The stream of public opinion, so tranquil in its onward progress, is originally formed of many opposing currents. But, as at the junction of two mighty rivers, though all for a time, amid the conflicting and intermingling waters, be uproar and confusion, at last they find a common issue, determined by the proportion of their respective forces, and with calm and unresisted majesty form a passage to the sea.”*

As to the immediate prospects of the dissenters, I am not competent to hazard a decided opinion. On the one hand, the Establishments have in them much talent and worth, and great wealth, numbers and influence; and in this day of their trial, they are very naturally making common cause. In high quarters, the persuasion is deep-rooted, that you must preserve the altar, if you would

* Mr. Douglas’s Address.

uphold the throne. Besides, there are in every old country, and there are in our own, and they are not without their use in times of rapid change, men of talent, education, and piety, who are yet so wedded to the most absurd abuses, as to employ the whole influence of their talents, and even of their piety, to defend, rather than correct them. There is often a tardiness about our legislators, too, by which they will grant nothing, till it is wrung from them; and St. Stephen's swarms with Honourable and Right Honourable defenders of abuses, which the dullest artizan has long before detected. The Slave trade—Slavery—the Reform question, exemplify this assertion. Evils are not redressed till half a century after the whole country denounces them. Our legislators have been hitherto in the rear, never in the front of the nation; and if the people had not pulled them along with giant strength, while every thing has been in progress, they would have remained stationary, or have fallen back. The stately old ship with her massive bulwarks, and her majestic rigging, encumbered with the number of her hands, and devoted to an antiquated seamanship, sees the low-built adventurer with few to work her, and no useless tackle, yet with resistless power, cutting the waters, and shooting fast a-head; and were the friendly rope not cast aboard, and the old vessel dragged along, she would remain far at sea, lumbering among the billows, long after her swift rival had reached the port, and disembarked the cargo.—So that years may pass, and this generation may pass, before any material ecclesiastical change be effected. Nor need this vex us much. Come it will.

On the other hand, there are opposite symptoms. The progress of our opinions is more rapid than the most sanguine of our friends could have anticipated. A goodly proportion of the press is doing its duty extensively. It has been admitted even by the king's ministers, that a large majority of the empire, and a very large majority of the church-going part of it are unconnected with the Established Churches. Even of Scotland, Mr. Douglas remarks, "It is obvious to the most superficial observer, that the Church of Scotland, unless some remedy is provided, is, in this part of the country at least, in a rapid

state of decay. We have the bare walls of an Established Church, but the living stones are in every sense absent. The population of the country have gone elsewhere. The Church of Scotland, in several respects, is worse off than the Established Church of Ireland. In the latter country, if the majority of the people are attached to Popery, the wealthier minority profess to adhere to Reformed Episcopacy. In Scotland the wealth of the country has been long Episcopalian." If it be so in Scotland, what must it be in England and Ireland? Both in Scotland and England, members of the Establishment, in growing numbers, have adopted and avowed the opinions of the dissenters, on the propriety of a total separation of the Church from the state; they feel indignant that they who are so well able to support their own institutions, should hang, like paupers, on the state for their support; they are persuaded that it is as unjust, and as mean, for dissenters to be burdened for the building of their Churches and the pay of their ministers, as it would be to tax them, if they could, for the building of their dwelling-houses, or the payment of their domestic expenditure; and they are convinced that the opposite opinions and usages will soon be matter of history, as relics of a half-barbarous age. The intemperate violence of our opponents, too, is forwarding our cause greatly; as their ill-concealed apprehensions betoken its issue. And, finally, the dissenters, have, as yet, made only a partial commencement of their work; their chief exertions remain to be made. Here and there they have moved in Scotland, and some slight demonstrations have been made elsewhere; but even the Scottish dissenters are but partially up, and the might of England remains to be roused. If, then, so much has been effected by these small affairs of outposts, what may not be accomplished when the whole forces advance?

The ecclesiastical structure has been examined,* and it has been found insecure—the national lever has been forced into the wall—a firm fulcrum has been placed—and there is no want of hands. The first jerk has made

* See Parliamentary proceedings respecting the English and Irish Churches.

the whole fabric totter; and many within are in rage and consternation. Let them come out tranquilly with all their honours, and with all their baggage, for it is not the *men*, but the *system*, that must be overthrown. If they will not come out, they must, perhaps with little ceremony, be kindly brought out; for sooner or later the work must be done; one strong pressure of the national might must be applied to the lever—and then the structure will be tossed from its foundation. None will ultimately rejoice more in the result than the worthy proportion of those who shall be dislodged. They will not be houseless, but will quickly find themselves in less stately, but more secure habitations; where they shall be more happily, and more honourably, because more scripturally, accommodated.

APPENDIX.

SINCE the former edition of this Pamphlet was published, the work of Dr. INGLIS in defence of Ecclesiastical Establishments has appeared—a production in every respect worthy of its author. Although he modestly denominates it a *Tract*, it contains a digest of nearly all that may be urged in defence of Establishments, prepared with care, arranged with much skill, and presenting the arguments, and the replies to objections, with great perspicuity and ability. Its spirit is not less to be admired than its other qualities. There is hardly an offensive expression in the whole book; and yet from first to last it has all the life and energy which may be expected from strong, yet well moderated, feeling.—There would be some comfort and hope in controversy were it always managed in this way.

It would be arrogant to presume to reply fully to such a work in the few pages of this Appendix. Indeed as Dr. I. does not profess to advance much, if any thing, that is new, a reply to his arguments has been anticipated in what has been previously written by many in opposition to Civil Establishments of Christianity. I shall only present my readers with examples of the manner in which Dr. I. conducts the arguments, and in which, if I mistake not, even *he* has signally failed in the leading positions he has taken; and I trust the examples shall be given with fairness and candour.

The reader cannot but be struck with the air of confidence, or rather triumph, with which Dr. I. begins, continues, and concludes. I do not ascribe this to artifice; with Dr. I. it seems to be the natural expression of strong conviction. But as it is not without its effects on certain minds, even in this age when men are little apt to defer to human authority, I shall contrast the second sentence in the Preface of Dr. I. (for thus early does his triumph com-

mence) with the judgment of a man, whose superiority to most other men, I presume Dr. I. himself will agree with the British public in acknowledging. Says Dr. I. "Perhaps no argument, on a subject on which wise men have differed, was ever more triumphant than that by which the cause of Ecclesiastical Establishments has been maintained." Says Mr. Hall, "That Christianity is a simple institution, unallied to worldly power; that a Church is a voluntary society, invested with a right to choose its own officers, and acknowledging no head but Jesus Christ; that ministers are brethren, whose emolument should be confined to the voluntary contributions of the people, are maxims drawn from so high an authority, that it may well be apprehended that the Church is doomed to vanish before them."* Thus oppositely do men judge on the same subjects.

In an introductory section, Dr. I. gives a short history of the controversy, which he naturally subordinates to his own view of the argument. "The objection to Ecclesiastical Establishments as connected with the state, is not of very distant or early origin. We can look back on the circumstances of the Christian world, and the opinions or sentiments of men respecting such Establishments, before any opposition to them was contemplated. We can also look back—with assurance of not being deceived—on all the circumstances connected with the origin of that opposition, ascertain the credit due to its authors, and form an estimate of the events by which it was influenced, and to which it still bears a close and faithful resemblance."† The *history* is then given to this effect:—No objection was made to the establishment of Christianity under Constantine, which, on the contrary, "was hailed by the Christian world as a blessed and glorious event"—it was acquiesced in during the middle ages—it was adopted by all the Reformers—opposition to the principle was first broached by the fanatical Anabaptists of Germany—the fathers of the Scottish Secession held it—and, in fact, opposition to it is a thing of yesterday.—This statement is plausible, but, unfortunately for its influence, it will not bear examination.

Let it never be forgotten, that the apostles, the apostolical Churches, and all the Christian world during the three first centuries, were, in practice, as we are. Then, what are the facts respecting the Establishment of Christianity under Constantine? 1. The Christian Church had never from its commencement passed under a storm of persecution so terrible, as that by which it was assailed immediately before Constantine's accession. The four edicts of Diocletian, issued A. D. 303 and 304, are well known. By the first, the Christians were deprived of their civil privileges, and of their books, and their churches were ordered to be demolished; by the second, their ministers were imprisoned; the third ordained that these captives should be tortured, to induce them to renounce their religion and sacrifice to the gods; and the fourth provided that torture in every form should be applied to Christians throughout the empire to drive them to apostasy.* Is it wonderful that when, in such circumstances, a deliverer suddenly appeared in the person of Constantine, the Christians should gratefully accept the tranquillity brought to them, without very scrupulously inquiring into the terms on which it was vouchsafed? 2. The settlement of the affairs of religion by Constantine was so objectionable, as that no enlightened friend of Establishments, at this day, will venture to defend it. Not contented with exempting Christians from persecution, by securing to them the free and unmolested exercise of their worship, or even with establishing Christianity by law, he proceeded to pass severe edicts against the pagans, enjoining the forcible suppression of their idolatrous worship; he exercised the same violence toward the numerous separatists from the Catholic Church; and he assumed a lordly power over the favoured Church itself. The following are some of the expressions of Mosheim. "Toward the latter end of his life, he issued edicts for destroying the heathen temples, and prohibiting sacrifices . . . Though he permitted the Church to remain a body politic, distinct from that of the state, as it had formerly been, yet he assumed to himself the supreme power over this sacred body, and the right of

* Mosheim, cent. 4th.

modelling and governing it in such a manner as should be most conducive to the public good. This right he enjoyed without opposition, as none of the bishops presumed to call his authority in question . . . He made several important changes in the form of the Roman government. And as there were many important reasons which induced him to *suit the administration of the Church to those changes in the civil constitution*, this necessarily introduced among the bishops new degrees of eminence and rank."* The following is a short extract from an edict of Constantine respecting the Arians. "Moreover if any book composed by Arians shall be found, it shall be committed to the flames . . . This also I enjoin, that if any one shall be found to have concealed any writing composed by Arius, and shall not immediately bring it, and consume it in the fire, *death shall be his punishment*; for as soon as he is taken in this crime, he shall suffer a capital punishment." And as to the other sects, the Novatians, the Valentinians, the Marcionists, &c. with imperial despotism he denounces them as "enemies of truth, evil counsellors," &c. and "he deprives them of the liberty of meeting for worship, either *in public or private places*; and gives all their oratories to the orthodox Church."† Such was this first, and universally "hailed," Establishment!—and it suggests these two remarks—that the civil Establishment of Christianity from its very commencement has been allied with persecution, and spiritual usurpation—and that the acquiescence of the Church in Constantine's settlement no more favours the legal sanction and compulsory support of Christianity, than it does sanguinary intolerance and persecution. Why will the friends of Establishments be so unwise and rash as always to force us back to this most inauspicious era, the age of Constantine? 3. There existed, prior to the age of Constantine, numerous separatists from the general Church, against whom, I have said, Constantine issued his intolerant edicts. Among these, the Novatians held the chief place; a sect which arose about the middle of the third century, which, indeed, carried its discipline towards those who had once lapsed into

* Mosheim, cent. 4th.

† Jones, chap. iii.

idolatry to an extreme; but whose creed was pure, the lives of whose members were exemplary, who rapidly grew in numbers, spread over the Roman empire, kept themselves from the corruptions of the Established Church, and from whom, probably, the illustrious Waldenses sprung. We know these men chiefly from the accounts of their enemies; but this we know, that they retained the primitive mode of supporting Christianity, and were rewarded, as we have seen, with persecution. The following are the words of Mosheim respecting the Novatians. "Among the sects that arose in this century, (the third,) we place that of the Novatians the last . . . Novatian erected a new society, of which he was the first bishop; and which, on account of the severity of its discipline, was followed by many, and flourished, until the fifth century, in the greatest part of those provinces that had received the gospel . . . There was no difference, in point of doctrine, between the Novatians and other Christians . . . They considered the Christian Church as a society where virtue and innocence reigned universally, and none of whose members, from their entrance into it, had defiled themselves with any enormous crime; and, of consequence, they looked upon every society, which re-admitted heinous offenders to its communion, as unworthy of the title of a true Christian Church. It was from hence, also, that they assumed the title of *Cathari*, i. e. the *pure*; (Puritans,) and what shewed a still more extravagant degree of vanity and arrogance, they obliged such as came over to them from the general body of Christians to be baptized a second time, as a necessary preparation for entering into their society."*

What now becomes of Dr. I.'s *implied* argument from the establishment of Constantine? The history of this event should be better known; for the more the character of Constantine himself, the nature of the power which he assumed over the Christian church, the exercise of the same intolerant power toward all without her pale, and the disastrous results of the whole, are understood, the more clearly will the unhappy tendency and effects

* Mosheim, cent. iii.

of the alliance then formed betwixt the state and the Church become apparent.

The other steps in the *history* may be noticed more lightly. During the middle ages, "the Church was in the wilderness;" and the Waldenses, and those who held their opinions, comprehending under these, not the inhabitants of the Alpine vallies only, but separatists from the Established Church in many parts of Europe, maintained the primitive order in practice, and, it is probable, to some extent in principle too; for in a Tract of the Waldenses quoted by Milton, they say, "that to endow Churches is an evil thing; the Church then fell off, and turned whore, sitting on that beast in the Revelation, when, under pope Silvester, (in the fourth century) she received these donations." *

The Reformers, as I have shown, were as hostile to toleration as they were friendly to Establishments; and, indeed, taught that the magistrate was not less bound to suppress false religion, than to endow and support the true.

If Dr. I. has *his* pedigree, then, we have *ours* also. If his church be the lineal descendant of the Constantines and the Silvesters, and those who ranged themselves under these dignitaries, ours claims a prior and purer origin. If he give one history of the controversy, we meet him with another. We say, that, *de facto*, for three hundred years, the Christian Church, unallied with the state, as we are, was supported like ours, by the voluntary contributions of its friends; and of this fact, with all its value and consequences, no man can deprive us—that the same power, which first legalized and endowed Christianity, smote with the one hand, while it caressed with the other; bound with fetters the serviles whom it caressed; and claimed and exercised the terrible power of doing the one and the other at its pleasure—the Novatians, the Waldenses, "the Church in the wilderness," are our predecessors—the English Puritans, the dissenters of Europe, the voluntary benevolent associations for extending the knowledge and power of Christianity,

* Milton's Prose Works. Likeliest means to remove hirelings out of the Church.

American Christians, have all kept our principles active in their practice—and at this day these principles are understood more clearly, and avowed more extensively than heretofore. This is *our* history of the controversy.

Let us now see how Dr. I. conducts his *argument*. It is given in three chapters—the first asserting the divine authority for Church Establishments—the second answering objections to this high claim—and the third treating of their utility.

We object to arguments derived solely from the Old Testament on two grounds. 1. Because they prove too much. Take the example of the Jewish kings, who were bound to exercise the severities of the code of the theocracy against religious as well as civil offences—as idolatry—Sabbath-breaking—the neglect of the passover, &c. Now it is plain that you must either adopt the whole of the example, or go to the New Testament to determine to what extent it binds you. The former is not held; the latter abandons the argument from the case of the kings of Israel. Dr. I. indeed, would plead that we must adopt as much of their example as is fixed by the moral law. But the moral law binds us to obey every positive institution which it pleases God to appoint. Under one dispensation, it pleased God to appoint coercion in regard to religion; and it would have been immoral in the Jewish authorities to refuse to exercise this coercive power. The question is, what has God revealed under the new dispensation, the appointments of which the moral law binds *us* to observe? 2. Because as far as compulsory payments for the support of religion are concerned, they fail. God commanded that tithes should be paid, but we have no evidence, but the reverse, that he ever required that tithes should be exacted by legal violence. Dr. I. likes this sentiment very ill; but in place of disproving it, he says, "it wears the aspect of a *dernier* resort in the argument. What sort of evidence do our opponents suppose that we ought to produce? Was it really to be supposed that the brief history which has been transmitted to us of the Jewish commonwealth, should contain a statement of what we should now call *actions at law*, which had taken place, for enabling individuals to recover their rights, or a compensation for the

loss of them? Are not all laws enacted with a distinct understanding that they are to be enforced? Is there any thing in the case of the Mosaic institutions that should lead to an imagination of their having been, in this respect, an exception from the general rule? Were not the sanctions of the Mosaic law temporal and worldly? And can it, in this case, be supposed that such a law as that in question was not enforced by temporal and worldly means?" * This will not do. We ask no record of *actions at law*, which Dr. I. might have very well known—we do not demand even one allusion to them—we do not advance a plea for the record of even one case of legal violence on one solitary tithe-recusant, as a warning to the discontented; but we have a right to demand, in the absence of all these, *one penalty appended to the tithe-law*, in the very minute code of the theocracy, *as we find in that code against other civil and religious offences*. That to pay tithes under that economy was a sacred duty we admit, and that the man who withheld them robbed God; but we see a wisdom in leaving the offender in this case, as in the higher departments of obedience, exclusively to the judgment of God. It exempted the priests of Jehovah from the odium attaching to civil processes, and violent restraints, for their livings. It cherished in the bosoms of the priests a sublime confidence in God. And it made their resources to depend mainly on their standing favourably in the estimation of those for whom they ministered, by the purity, fidelity, and dignity of their characters. In a word, we only ask what every tithe-recusant had a right to ask, had an *action at law* been brought against him—*show us your warrant from the statute-book for this action*, and for the violence you employ, and the damages you claim. It is not unnatural for Dr. I. to refer to *actions at law*, but with all deference, I am not sure how far it is wise; for had such *actions* been as frequent in Palestine as in Britain or Ireland, they would probably have been alluded to, however incidentally, in the sacred history, as forming a part of the every-day usage of the country.

And yet it is remarkable that Dr. I. makes a very

* Vindication, pp. 41, 42.

just and liberal concession to dissenters, as far as the argument against them taken from the theocracy is concerned. He says, "Now, I admit, that, under the Mosaic dispensation, there neither was, nor could be, any such dissent from the Established Church as prevails in the present times. Any man who had publicly and openly disavowed the Levitical priesthood in the exercise of its functions must have been cut off from among the people of God; and I readily concede that, for this reason, there is nothing in the ordinances of Moses, or rather in the procedure and practice under these ordinances, that can be regarded as a positive and direct example of an Ecclesiastical Establishment maintained at the expense of a community, *inclusive of dissenters*." * This admission given cautiously, and with something of timidity, is not to be despised. Let it only be acted upon. Tell British and Irish dissenters—tell them plainly—the Bible knows no case exactly like yours relatively to the Churches that are—we cannot apply the tithe law to you—we *think* you should pay the tithes to the clergy whom you do not acknowledge, and pay for churches in which you do not worship, but even the Mosaic law does not warrant us to go farther in regard to you—we cannot *cut you off* for refusing to acknowledge the existing priesthood, and, therefore, we must let you alone—we have no authority to *exact* from you. Tell all dissenters this, and act upon it, and some considerable step shall then be taken from things as they are, to things as they should be.

But the Dr. will not let us off after all. For he not only affirms that the Mosaic law required tithes *without legal exemption*, (which all admit) he goes back to the patriarchal ages, and there he discovers pregnant proofs of Establishments, with arguments for binding dissenters as well as churchmen for their support. Melchisedec is the eminent person, to whose history Dr. I. refers, with no slender confidence. No fewer than eight pages of the work are devoted to the argument from Melchisedec; and, indeed, he returns to this case again and again, as to a necessary and a safe refuge. For Dr. I. perceives that the Jewish theocracy will not suit *us*, and, overleap-

* Vindication, p. 39.

ing that system, he is desirous of settling his argument on the patriarchal dispensation, which resembled, more nearly than the Jewish theocracy, the simple constitution of the Christian church. I have already shown that the argument from the case of Melchisedec, by proving too much, proves nothing; it would require that the regal and sacerdotal offices should be united in the same person, (which, indeed, was one design of this type) a junction for which our opponents will not contend. But Dr. I. thinks that this junction shows that there must be *some* connection, of a very close nature, betwixt these offices; and that it is very unlikely that Melchisedec *the king* would neglect Melchisedec *the priest*, but, on the contrary, would employ his power, in the one character, to enforce the system over which he presided, in the other. Has Dr. I. forgotten the meaning of his titles?—"king of righteousness, king of peace." From such a king, no forced exactions from his dissenting subjects, no favouritism to some one party in his dominions, *could* proceed. Happy if king William, and all other kings, would form on the model of the good Melchisedec!

But let us see how Dr. I. makes out his case from Melchisedec against dissenters. He tells us that Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec, and probably did so regularly—that it is also probable that other patriarchs and worshippers of God did the same—that Melchisedec was the head of the worshippers of that age—and that, as it is probable many who had to pay tithes, did not enjoy the ministrations of Melchisedec, we must not exempt dissenters now from the compulsory support of those from whom they receive no direct benefit! "It is plain that Abraham did not depend on Melchisedec for the stated and ordinary ministrations of the priesthood; yet it is not less certain that he contributed to the maintenance of Melchisedec as a priest; and it would be most unnatural to suppose that either the relation in which he stood to Melchisedec, or the duties which he owed to him, were peculiar to himself individually, or not realized in the case of any other. It is more reasonable to suppose that, in this respect, the condition of Abraham was the same with that of other patriarchs—the heads of families or tribes—who were devoted to the service and worship

of the true God. Absolute certainty is not in this case, to be attained; but even strong probability, in reference to the point in question, cannot be regarded as an unimportant element in our present argument. For if Melchisedec, as the head of the priesthood under the patriarchal dispensation, derived tithes from every household among the worshippers of the true God—and consequently from many to whom it cannot be supposed that his immediate ministrations extended—it seems strongly to forbid any rash conclusion that dissenters from an established Church must be exempted from all contributions to its support as a national institution—merely on the ground that they decline to be of the number, who immediately and directly profit by the labour of its ministers."*

Let us see what assumptions are here. 1. Because Abraham paid tithes (interpreted by Paul to be "the tenth of the spoils," obtained from the conquered kings) *on one occasion*, therefore he paid tithes to Melchisedec *regularly for his maintenance*. 2. Because Abraham *gave* him tithes, therefore tithes are to be *exact*ed. 3. Because we know that *Abraham* gave him tithes on this one occasion, therefore the *other patriarchs*, and "*every household* among the worshippers of the true God," paid him tithes too. 4. Because all those worshippers did not enjoy his "immediate ministrations," therefore dissenters, who do not choose to profit by the labours of the endowed clergy, must not be exempted from contributing to their support.

What shall we say to such assumptions, gravely substituted in the place of argument? What must that cause be which impels such a man as Dr. I. to make such an intellectual exhibition as this? Yet if the case of Melchisedec will not justify Civil Establishments of religion, and compulsory exactions for their support, and if the example of the Jewish theocracy will not, the argument of Dr. I. from the patriarchal and Jewish institutions is annihilated. Let the reader examine and judge.

A few words shall suffice on the argument from the New Testament, as I have already gone over this ground. He begins with referring to the unchangeableness of God,

* Vindication, pp. 40, 41.

(as if this guaranteed the unalterable nature of positive institutions)—he then selects the passage from the second Psalm, “be wise now, therefore, O ye kings,” &c. and passages in the lxxii. Psalm (as if these bound princes to employ their civil, any more than their military power, for upholding and propagating the gospel)—the prophecy of Isaiah respecting kings and queens becoming nursing fathers, and nursing mothers to the church, is next argued, (as if many a private individual had not been, what kings and queens should be, nurses of the church, fathers and mothers in Israel)—“he is the minister of God to thee for good, &c. pray for kings and all that are in authority, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty,” are then pressed into the service, (as if any ingenuity, any force, could extract from these sayings an argument for legislative and coercive enactments for the support of the Church.) These passages have been examined in the preceding pages; and the reader will find that if they will not prove the propriety of Ecclesiastical Establishments, nothing in the New Testament will, in the judgment of Dr. I.; for he adduces, and, indeed, can adduce, no other, that even seem to look so directly toward the subject.

But it is proper to advert to Dr. I.’s argument derived from what the New Testament *does not* say—from its silence as to any direct and express prohibition of Ecclesiastical Establishments. A Civil Establishment of religion once existed in the Church, “and until we have some opposite and unequivocal intimation of the Divine counsel, we are bound to conclude, that no change has been in this respect intended.”* And again he asks, “is there any other case, then, in which God has been pleased to abolish what he once authorised and sanctioned, without such an intimation of his purpose as we have looked for in vain in the case of Ecclesiastical Establishments?”† The answer which we are able to return is simple, and, I hope, satisfactory. *First*, We have examples of appointments in the Old Testament system, certainly abolished, yet not by any express intimation of the Divine counsel abolishing those appointments in particu-

* Vindication, p. 54.

† Ib. p. 57.

lar. Dr. I. will not affirm that tithes are now obligatory by Divine authority, exclusive of any human appointment, as under the Jewish dispensation, and that now, as then, the man who should refuse them would rob God; yet where is the *express* intimation that this appointment has ceased? The Aaronical priesthood has been expressly set aside; but where is the express intimation that *no hereditary priesthood* should now exist in the Church? And so of many other cases. *Secondly*, Dr. I. will admit that a power in religion, *co-extensive with that of the Jewish kings*, is incompetent to Christian rulers; but where is the express intimation of the counsel of Heaven respecting this *restriction*?—But, *finally*, we hold that the Jewish constitution, *as a whole*, has been set aside, and, therefore, all its parts are abolished. The constitution and the relations of the New Testament Church must be learned, not from those of the Jewish Church, but from the New Testament. “There is a disallowing of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.” There has been “the removing of the things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.”

I may be excused for passing Dr. I.’s answers to the objections brought against arguments, which I have endeavoured to shew are inconclusive; and I shall now advert to his last chapter, which treats of the utility of Ecclesiastical Establishments. In conducting this part of his argument, Dr. I. appears to me to have fallen into the following mistakes, which, as far as I can judge, prove fatal to it.

First, he affirms that after the cessation of miracles in the Christian Church, Christianity was propagated “in a great measure by an interposition of the civil power, in aid of the ministers of Christ, as an instrument in the hand of their Heavenly Master.” (pp. 171, 172.) Now, I say nothing more of this fancy, that Ecclesiastical Establishments, in some measure, took the place of miracles, which it is lamentable to see insisted on, even by implication; but I fearlessly meet the assertion of Dr. I. with the counter assertion, for the truth of which I appeal to the testimony of history, that from the days of Constantine downwards through the middle ages, Eccle-

siastical Establishments were the grand engines of that corruption, intolerance, and persecution, by which the dominant and nominal Church became distinguished, till ultimately she retained little of religion but the name.

A *second mistake* will be found in the following strange assertion, which contains one of Dr. I.'s arguments for the utility of Establishments. "It is manifest, that, if there were no Establishment, the support of the ministers of religion would be in proportion to the demand for their services."* The meaning of this is, that, if there were no Establishment, the supply of ministers would be regulated by the wants of Churches already existing. But will this theory abide the test of facts? Whence came the supply of Christian labourers during the first three centuries—not to break the bread of life among those only by whom it was enjoyed and relished—but to impart it to the perishing multitudes, by whom it was undesired and unknown? Whence has originated the supply of Christian pastors among the growing numbers of British dissenters, and the still more rapidly increasing Churches of America? What is the principle of every missionary institution that exists, or that has existed? Is it not to prepare and send forth labourers—not for the fields that are already fruitful—but to inclose the wastes, to cultivate the wildernesses, and to make the deserts to rejoice and blossom as the rose? The truth is, the ordinary principles of demand and supply *in trade* are but very partially applicable to the Christian Church. In trade, self-interest is the sole moving principle. Self-interest demands: self-interest provides the supply. The market-place is constructed, and thronged, under the impulse of selfishness; selfishness brings forth the price, and gives and receives the purchase. But Christianity, the fruit of Divine benevolence, employs, as its instrument, that human benevolence, which itself has created in the breasts of Christians. The command, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," was the expression of the Saviour's love to a world which he had visited in his compassion, and for the salvation of whose inhabitants he had laid down his life; and by men

* Vindication, page 178.

in whom the love of Christ had produced, as its fruit, love to men, was that command to be carried into execution. "Good will to men" revealed the gospel from heaven; "good will to men" is to diffuse that gospel over the earth. "Freely ye have received, freely give," is the law of Christ. The real demand then, on the Christian Church is, not its own necessities only, but those of a world perishing for lack of knowledge, perishing in its sins, and uttering in the ear, not of selfishness, but of benevolence, the piercing cry, "Come over to us and help us." It was on the voluntary, not the compulsory principle, that this call was obeyed at first; on the same principle are Christians obeying it at this day, forming their sacred treasures, and sending forth devoted men of God from their shores, to visit the remotest and the most inhospitable regions, full of the blessing of the gospel of Christ; and we have the full conviction, that, as it has been, so it will be, and that by their acting on the same sanctioned principle, will Christians become the happy instruments of enriching the world with the salvation, and subjecting it to the obedience of Jesus.—I conceive, therefore, that the talk of Dr. Chalmers on the subject of demand and supply, and which Dr. I. has copiously borrowed from his pages, is worse than trifling.

A *third error* in this chapter of utility is, that the voluntary principle will not suit the poorer, and the more thinly peopled districts of the country. Dr. I. says, "It will not be denied that their, (the dissenters) places of worship are commonly erected—not where the spiritual wants of men are the greatest—but where the appetite and demand for religious instruction are the strongest. Nor is it possible that the procedure should be different."* Were I treating of the *principle* of this objection, I should refer to the preceding paragraph; but, as a question of history, I affirm that facts repel it. We must not condemn the voluntary principle, because it has not effected all that it is fitted to accomplish. In this way, Christianity itself might be condemned. We have a right to assert that what the voluntary principle has accomplished in some places already, it is fitted to

* Vindication, page 184.

accomplish, in similar cases, any where—just as we say, that the triumphs of the gospel among the South-Sea Islanders, or the North American Indians, or the savages at the Cape, proved its competency to effect similar triumphs among all placed in similar unfavourable circumstances. Now, to how many poor and thinly-peopled districts may the dissenters appeal. Look to Orkney, where the desire of the supply was both excited and gratified by the instrumentality of dissenters. Look to Wales, where the Calvinistic Methodists have five hundred churches. Consult the history of the exertions of the Wesleyan Methodists, of the English Independents and Baptists; and it will be found, that it is by their exertions mainly that religion exists, to the extent to which it does exist, in the poorest, and most thinly peopled, districts of England. All these cases are refutations of the assumption of Dr. I. No man pretends that the dissenters have any where done what they should, but this is not to be ascribed to the voluntary principle, but to the imperfect extent to which it has been carried into effect.

Farther, Dr. I. seems to assume, that the doctrine of dissenters is, that were the voluntary principle acted upon exclusively, they alone would do more than both they and the Church do at present, and that the exertions of the Established Churches would cease. He says, "The adversaries of a Church Establishment will not say that the labour of the Established clergy is altogether useless"—(No, indeed!) "but they seem to maintain that if there were no Establishments, the ministers of what they call *voluntary Churches* would do more good than is now done by their own labour and that of the Established clergy combined. This wears the aspect of a very bold position."* But who holds it? I know not. Does Dr. I. mean to say, that, if the Civil Establishment of the Church were withdrawn, the Established clergy would hold their peace, and that the members of their Churches would cease to assemble for public worship, or to exert themselves for the general interests of Christianity? No, our belief is, that fresh zeal would be added to the

* Vindication, p. 177.

faithful and the zealous among their clergy—that new life would animate the private members of their Churches—that feeling how much they had done, however unconsciously, to repress the principles of voluntary exertion, in time past, they would labour to undo that repression in time to come—and that, as from their wealth they are well able, the truly Christian portion of them would rival the most devoted among the dissenters, in the amount of their benevolent Christian exertions.

Another remarkable failure in argument is an attempt made by Dr. I. to strike a balance betwixt the amount of temptation which Establishments, on the one hand, and voluntary Churches, on the other, present to ministers of the gospel. In determining the question of utility, he admits that the temptation of an Establishment is to indolence, while we have a strong excitement to activity—that the peculiar temptation to the ministers of voluntary Churches is to corrupt their doctrine and discipline to please the hearers—and that this part of the argument must be settled by the answer to this question, Whether it is worse for the Church to have an indolent, or an unfaithful clergy?* (as if, after all, any part of the constitution of the Christian Church must resolve itself into a mere choice of evils!) Alas! bad men will find temptations every where. Judas was tempted by avarice in following Jesus. But can these facts be disputed?—that the discourses, preached or printed, of evangelical dissenters, have been not less remarkable for their fidelity in asserting Christian truth, and in their minute discrimination of Christian character, for their *searching* quality, to use a common expression, than those of the same class of the Established clergy—that if ecclesiastical discipline, in the admission, superintendence, or exclusion of members, (the grand test of fidelity,) exist at all in Britain, it exists in North Britain chiefly, in South Britain entirely, among the dissenters—and that in the largest Establishment in the country, the Church of England, indolence is not only charged on a large proportion of the clergy, but faithless deviation from their own articles, subscribed

* Vindication, p. 205, *et seq.*

and sworn, so as to justify the saying of Chatham, "a Calvinistic creed, and an Arminian clergy."

Dr. I. seems to err equally in *his estimate of America*. There the voluntary principle acts on a scale so ample, with effects so magnificent, and yet in the midst of circumstances so unfavourable, that its success may be regarded as itself a practical demonstration of its excellence. The unfavourable circumstances to which I refer are these—the existence of upwards of two millions of slaves in the United States, and the demoralizing influence of slavery—and the annual discharging on the American shores of crowds of emigrants from all parts of Europe, whose character and habits are not, for the most part, friendly to piety. In *reducing*, as much as possible, the spiritual condition of America, Dr. I. relies chiefly on the testimony of two individuals, one of whom wrote many years ago, and on that of an anonymous writer in the Instructor; and he not only sets aside some of the recent testimonies of the General Assembly of the United States, but he overlooks the authentic ecclesiastical statistics for 1833, presenting what may be considered *the present* religious state of America. From these, the following are extracts.

	Ministers.	Communi- cants.	Population.
Calvinistic Baptists, -	2,914	303,827	2,743,453
Methodist Episcopalians,	1,777	476,000	2,600,000
Presbyterian General Assembly,	1,801	182,017	1,800,000
Congregationalists, Orthodox,	1,000	140,000	1,260,000
Total,	7,492	1,101,844	8,403,453

Besides these numbers in a population of about 12,000,000 or 13,000,000, there are many other religious denominations specified in the table from which I quote. And the following remarks, taken from a periodical in this country, are probably near the truth. "In Great Britain and Ireland, there is scarcely one evangelical Church to every eighteen hundred of the population; while in America there is fully one to every nine hundred, including the slave community. Again, in Great Britain and Ireland, Catholics, Jews, Unitarians, Universalists, and such as are nowhere accounted

orthodox, are fully *as one to three* of the population; in America they are scarcely *as one to six*. Besides these conclusive facts, we may add, that we find in the columns of a High Church newspaper, published in this country, a complaint that the people of Great Britain hardly support *four* religious newspapers; while in America upwards of *fifty* are flourishing." What facts will justify the voluntary principle, if these fail?

But the most extraordinary error of all into which Dr. I. falls, in descanting on the utility of Establishments, is, their supposed tendency to *unite nations*. "When men in authority are united to those over whom they rule, by a profession of the same faith, and by the same exercises of religious worship, it has a tendency to unite their hearts in one bond of mutual confidence and mutual love." And this is to be accomplished by "an Established Church!" * This may do for Utopia, but will it apply to any region on the surface of our planet? Will it do for Britain? Will it do for *Ireland*? Will Dr. I. after study and inquiry, succeed in naming the thing which so much *disunites* Scotland, England, and Ireland, as the Ecclesiastical Establishments of these countries, and which must continue to divide them, until this cause of division shall cease?

Upon the whole, the reasoning of Dr. I. in support of Establishments, from their supposed utility, seems not less infelicitous, than that in which he attempts to defend these institutions by the circumstances of the patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian dispensations, or by the direct authority of the word of God.

In surveying the work of Dr. I. I cannot forbear again remarking, that its tone is polite, kind, and manly. He does not expressly affirm, but he seems to write under the feeling, that in this strife the dissenters are, as they ever have been, the party aggrieved; and that, in these circumstances, to argue is enough—acrimony would be unworthy. What estimate must he form of the conduct of some of his coadjutors in this cause, who delight to add insult to wrong, and to cover their pages with reviling and slander?

* Vindication, pp. 219, 220.

It seems somewhat ominous for the cause of Ecclesiastical Establishments in this country, that they are so linked with one another. Were one so small, relatively to the empire, and so moderately expensive, as the Scottish, and which probably includes a majority of the people in this quarter, alone in question, it might, possibly, be endured for generations. But we have the huge English Establishment, with its bishops sitting where they ought not, and uniting with the most disliked of the Peerage against the people and their own anointed king, and its detested tithes, and its obnoxious clergy, and its dissatisfied and half-revolting people from the Church in which they remain. We have the Irish Establishment, the laughing-stock of Europe, regarded as a morbid incubus by the restless people of the island on which it is placed, and now in the process of being *cognosced* by the British parliament. These all make common cause, and the work of Dr. I. illustrates this fact. The Church of Scotland will not now lift her voice against Episcopacy, as she did in the olden time—then, it was “abjured prelacy,” now, it is “the venerable hierarchy;” nor will she tell the king, sitting in the Assembly by his Commissioner, that it is daring presumption to claim to be head of any church on earth, and that, as he values the permanence of his throne, he should renounce a presumption so offensive in the eyes of Him who is “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” No—this cannot be. These are not times to *agitate*, after this fashion, the friends of Establishments believe and feel. What will be the result of this perilous coalition? It may not be at hand—it may be still remote—but can it be other than this—that the sound and the unsound, the great and the small, the rich and the poor, religious Establishments, shall be mingled in the judgment of the British community—that the various partners in the common concern shall each be held responsible for the whole—and that, as one great and intolerable abuse, the more intolerable for its very magnitude, the voice of the indignant nation will ultimately demand the abolition of the whole?

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